

# THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1880.

## THE MYSTERIES OF HERON DYKE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT," "UNDER  
LOCK AND KEY," "BROUGHT TO LIGHT," ETC.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

A STRANGER AT THE ROSE AND CROWN.

MRS. CARLYON sat in the breakfast-room of her pleasant house at Bayswater, planning out in her own mind the route she should take on her journey to Hyères, for which place she intended to depart ere many days had elapsed, when the morning letters were brought in. One of them was from her niece, Ella Winter. Mrs. Carlyon opened it, and sat transfixed at the news it contained: nothing less than an avowal from that young lady that she was engaged to be married to Edward Conroy.

The shock and surprise sent Mrs. Carlyon into Norfolk. She gave orders to her maid, Higson, to prepare for their instant departure. "And it is just as well that I should go on another score," she told herself, as she stepped into her carriage to be driven to the station: "to ascertain whether my niece has relinquished that most absurd idea of hers—that she is not her uncle Gilbert's legal inheritor. What a ridiculous world we live in!" So that evening, Mrs. Carlyon, with her maid, arrived at Heron Dyke—without notice.

"Your letter, Ella, took my breath away," she began, hardly allowing herself a moment for greetings. "Has this engagement really gone so far that it cannot be broken off?"

"Who wants it to be broken off, Aunt Gertrude?" returned Ella.

"What?—Consider, my dear—a newspaper reporter, for Mr. Conroy is neither more nor less than that. A very nice gentlemanly young man, I admit, and one who has made himself a name in a certain way, but scarcely a match for the heiress of Heron Dyke."

"I am not going to marry for ambition, aunt, but for——"

"Don't forget that I shall expect you at Nunham Priors in spring, and so for the present no more

"From your affectionate kinsman,

"GILBERT DENISON.

"P.S.—I am expecting Frank home in a week or two. I shall try to chain him by the leg until you come. I am anxious that you and he should become well acquainted with one another."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Conroy, as he read this letter with an amused smile, for Miss Winter handed it to him when he came to the Hall on the morning she received it. "It is evident Mr. Denison has made up his mind that you should fall in love with this mythical son of his."

She nodded.

"After all, Ella, would not that seem to be a most sensible arrangement? It would unite the two branches of the family and concentrate the property of both. What a pity you have given away your heart to the wrong man!"

"I begin to think so too," gravely answered Ella. "It may not be too late to reclaim the heart and give it as you suggest."

"It is never well to be rash. Had you not better await the return of the wandering relative? Perhaps he might not value the offering."

"But if he should value it?"

"He may not value it as—as its present possessor does."

"I daresay he would, sir."

"In that case, and you wish to reclaim it, you shall have it back."

Ella glanced up. "Do you mean that? Is it a bargain?"

"Undoubtedly." And Mr. Conroy appeared to speak without reservation.

"Is he tiring of me?" thought Ella.

"Shall you take Mr. Denison's advice, and let the matter of the succession drop?" resumed Conroy, after a pause.

"Certainly not. You would not wish me to, would you?"

"No. I think if any fraud was enacted, it should be traced out and exposed. I have always said so. But, do you know *why* I have chiefly wished it?"

"Why have you?"

"For your own peace, my love. I see you will have none until the matter shall be set at rest."

"That is true; that is true," she impressively answered. "But, oh, Edward, what can we do? What can we do more than we have already done?"

"Nothing—that I see at present. It does not much matter, one way or the other."

"Do you mean that my title to the estate, or non-title, does not matter?"

"Not much, I say."

"I do not understand you this morning, Edward."

Conroy smiled. "You will understand me better sometime."

"That I am sure I never shall—if I am to marry that young Denison."

"Yes, you will, despite young Denison," returned Conroy, the same provoking smile still upon his lips.

It was known that Mrs. Ducie had been suffering from a severe cold. Suddenly, without bidding good-bye to anyone, she started for London: with the object, as was understood, of obtaining better medical advice. Nullington hoped she would obtain that, and be restored to health, for she was rather a favourite.

Mrs. Ducie did not return; and the next piece of news heard was that her well-known miniature phaeton, together with its pair of ponies, had been bought by Lord Camberley and presented to his aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Featherstone. From this, gossips argued, Mrs. Ducie's return to Nullington seemed a somewhat problematical event. Captain Lennox—who appeared to have taken up his abode in London, paying The Lilacs a flying visit now and then, in by the night-train and away again in the morning—was questioned upon the point. He said Mrs. Ducie continued very unwell indeed; he was not sure but she would have to go abroad. It might have been from this item of problematical news that a report got about that the Captain was also about to leave Nullington. He himself neither denied it nor affirmed it: it would depend, he said, on his sister's health.

One evening, when the Captain had come down for a rather longer stay than usual now, he went into the billiard-room at the Rose and Crown. Lennox was a man who could not exist without society, or spend an evening at home with no company but his own.

After the Captain had played a few games with young Mr. Sandys, of Denne Park, and was about to quit the hotel, the landlord, Butterby, drew him aside.

"Can I speak with you a moment, sir?"

"Well?" cried the Captain, shortly.

"Pardon me, Captain, for asking; but would you mind telling me whether there's any truth in the report that you are about to leave The Lilacs?"

"What if there should be, eh?" asked the Captain, with a quick, suspicious glance at his questioner.

"Why simply this, sir," replied the landlord, "that I think I know of somebody who might take it off your hands, furniture and all."

"Oh, indeed! Who's that?" asked the Captain.

"A Mr. Norris, sir, who is stopping in the hotel. He says——"

"What's his business here?"

"Nothing in particular, sir: halted here promiscuous yesterday:

been going about a bit to see places. He's not a gentleman by any means," added the landlord. "I hope I know a gentleman when I see one, Captain; but he seems to have plenty of money. Retired from business, I should put it. Says he should like to settle down in this part of the country, for it takes his fancy, and is on the look out for what he calls a 'quiet little shanty' that would suit himself and his two grown-up daughters. So I thought, Captain, that if——"

"I understand," interrupted Lennox in his quick way. He paused for a moment or two, biting his lip, his eyes bent on the ground. "He looks awfully ill," was the landlord's unspoken thought, as he stood watching him. "But I suppose he goes the pace when he's in London. It's sure to tell on a man in the long run."

"It might be worth my while to see this Mr. Norris in the morning," said Lennox, breaking out of his reverie. "To tell you the truth, Butterby, I *have* some notion of leaving Nullington."

"So we heard. But I'm sorry to hear you say so, sir."

"Nothing, however, is settled at present. You see, my sister finds this part of the country a little too bleak for her, and I myself have been out of sorts for some time. We have some idea of travelling for a year or two. I shall see how she is when I next run up to town. We may perhaps come back here, after all."

"We shall miss you, sir, if you don't," spoke Butterby.

Captain Lennox looked undecided: as if he could not make up his mind. A minute or two passed before he spoke.

"You might take an opportunity, Butterby, of sounding this guest of yours as to what kind of place it is that he really wants. The Lilacs might be too small for him, or too expensive—it might not suit him in many ways. In that case my seeing him on the matter would be useless. I will look round in the morning about ten o'clock, and then you can tell me the result."

With that, Captain Lennox adjusted the camellia in his buttonhole, lighted a fresh cigar, linked his arm in the arm of young Sandys and went his way.

Captain Lennox was punctual. The clock was striking ten the next morning as he walked into the bar of the Rose and Crown.

"Mr. Norris would like to see you, sir," began the landlord. "I had a little talk with him last night; and, from what I can make out, if you can come to terms yours will be just the place to suit him. He's a little bit odd in some of his ways, but a pleasant party enough when you come to converse with him."

"You can show me to his room."

Mr. Norris was a tall, ungainly, big-boned man, dressed somewhat after the fashion of a middle-aged country squire of sporting proclivities, with cutaway coat, gaiters, blue-and-white necktie and high collar. But his clothes sat awkwardly upon him, and he seemed ill at ease in them. He rose up from the breakfast-table as Lennox entered the room, and waved him to a chair.



"Proud to see you, sir," he said. "Shall be at your service in two minutes. Am late this morning."

"Don't hurry yourself," said Captain Lennox, politely. But Mr. Norris rang the bell and had the tray taken away. He then drew his chair a little nearer the fire, so that he might face his guest, and spread his big bony hands out to the cheerful blaze.

"I'm told, sir, that you have a little shanty you are about to vacate," he said, "and as I'm in want of something of the kind we may perhaps strike a bargain."

"Possibly so, Mr. Norris. But it might be waste of time to go into any details before you have seen the place. I may tell you that there are three years of the lease still to run, and that I should like the furniture to be taken at a valuation."

"All right, Captain. If the place suits me we shan't quarrel about terms, I dessay. When shall I pay you a visit?"

"The sooner the better. I am due in London to-morrow. How would two o'clock to-day suit you? You would then have time to look over the cottage before dusk, and you might favour me with your company at dinner afterwards, if not otherwise engaged. It may take some little time to talk over preliminaries."

"All right, Captain. At two sharp I'll be with you."

Mr. Norris was as good as his word. A fly deposited him at The Lilacs at the time appointed, where he found Captain Lennox waiting. The Captain went with him over the premises. Mr. Norris made a very minute inspection of the place, peering into every nook and corner, and examining every cupboard and pantry in the house. About the condition of the furniture he did not seem to trouble himself. "It's good enough for me and my lasses," he said, with a wave of one of his large hands, when Lennox observed that he was afraid the drawing-room carpet was rather well worn.

Last of all the garden and grounds were thoroughly perambulated. "I like everything I've seen," said Mr. Norris as they went back indoors, "but before giving a final answer I must hear what my two lasses have to say. It's to be their home as well as mine, you know, Captain. Just now they are in the West of Ireland, but they'll be back in a week from to-day."

"In a week, eh?"

"Perhaps you don't care to wait so long as that for my answer?"

The Captain replied that a week more or a week less was a matter of very slight importance to him. So it was left at that.

When dinner was announced, Lennox sat down with his guest and was studiously polite, though he did not seem to be in much humour for talking. Mr. Norris, however, so far as he was concerned, did not let the conversation flag, while doing ample justice to the good things before him. He allowed no hint to drop as to what his profession in life had been, or was now; but from certain things he said Lennox came to the conclusion that he was a man who had seen a

good deal of the world and had been acquainted with several phases of life of a more or less curious kind. Dinner over, young Sandys and three or four other men dropped in; there was an adjournment to the smoking-room, and after a time some one suggested cards.

"Do you play, Mr. Norris?" asked Lennox with an air of languid interest.

"When I was a lad at home we used to play loo and speculation for nuts at Christmas time, and since then I've sometimes played a rubber of whist, but nothing more," answered Mr. Norris with his broad smile. "Still, I'm no spoil-sport, and if one of you will only give me a lesson or two I'll do my best."

Mr. Sandys undertook the part of Mentor and found his pupil a most apt one. Presently he said rather drily, "And now, I think, Mr. Norris, you will be quite able to take care of yourself." At which Mr. Norris nodded his head.

During the early part of the evening the luck seemed decidedly against him: but by-and-by his lost sovereigns began to find their way back to his pocket. It appeared to be a peculiarity of this Mr. Norris, that whenever he sustained a more severe loss than ordinary he leant back in his chair and gave vent to a hearty guffaw; whereas, when the cards happened to be in his favour and the pool fell to him, he looked as glum as a judge. Young Sandys stared at him through his eye-glass as though he were some strange animal who had found his way there by mistake, while Captain Lennox's cold, keen glances began to be directed more and more frequently towards his guest. It was dawning on the Captain's mind that Mr. Norris was perhaps not so much of a novice as he had tried to make himself out to be. At the close of the evening he rose from the table a winner to a small amount.

Norris was the first to leave. He bowed his awkward bow to the company generally, and shook hands with the Captain.

"Everything shall be settled in a week from now," he whispered, with a meaning look. "Rely upon that. Good-night."

"Queer fish that," said young Sandys, as the door closed on the lanky figure. "Where the deuce did you pick him up, Lennox?"

"I'm glad he's gone," said Lennox, with an air of weariness, as he dropped into a chair. "The fellow is after this place—if I should make up my mind to leave it."

"I say, old fellow, how jolly bad you look to-night!" continued the speaker, staring hard at Lennox.

"Yes, I'm altogether out of sorts. These horrible English winters are enough to kill anyone."

Captain Lennox was indeed glad that Mr. Norris had gone, and he would have been well pleased were he never going to see him again. He had contracted a great dislike for him, for which he could give no reasonable account to himself; a sort of dread, which had grown deeper and deeper as the evening had advanced.

And he could not shake it off. His dreams that night were troubled ones: through the whole of them the tall, gaunt figure of Mr. Norris loomed ominously. Even in his sleep he felt that he hated him.

Next morning the Captain rose unrefreshed, and started by an early train for London. He was thinking that he needed a different air from the English air just as greatly as his sister did.

It was at the Rose and Crown that Mr. Conroy stayed when at Nullington. He and Norris had once or twice met on the stairs and passed each other as strangers. On this evening, however, when Mr. Conroy was just about to go to rest, a tap came to the door of his sitting-room, and Norris appeared at it.

"I thought I'd just see whether you had retired yet, sir, having a word to say to you."

"Ah, is it you, Mr. Meath," said Conroy. "Come in. You have some news for me, I presume. What is it? Sit down."

"The news I have at present, sir, is this: that I have made some curious discoveries respecting the antecedents of the gentleman who goes by the name of Captain Lennox."

"Goes by the name! Is it not his real name?"

"Well, sir, he has gone by a lot of names in his time; but which of them's his real one is best known to himself."

Mr. Meath drew out a small memorandum-book and opened it. "Ten years ago," he began, "Lennox was passing under the name of Blyndon. At that time he was tuner to a large pianoforte firm in London. This situation he lost because a number of valuable articles were missed from different houses to which he was sent. We next hear of him, under the name of Perke, as book-keeper at a fashionable hotel in Mayfair. Here also some robberies were perpetrated, but whether by him or not I am not in a position to assert. In any case, he lost his situation before long. After this he appears to have gone abroad for two or three years, and was seen in Paris, Brussels, Homburg, and other places. In some way or other, probably by successful gambling, he seems to have feathered his nest pretty considerably. We next find him at Cheltenham."

"At Cheltenham!" involuntarily exclaimed Conroy.

"At Cheltenham, sir. He has become Captain Lennox then, and is a very great swell. Being Captain Lennox and a great swell, he is of course above petty peculations, unless some very tempting chance offers itself, as in the case of Major Piper's jewel-case. By his skill at cards and billiards he contrives to make a very comfortable income. He entices young men of fortune to his rooms and there fleeces them. Do you follow me, sir?"

"Quite so."

"It would appear that he at length takes up fears that Cheltenham might become too warm for him; and he wisely beats a retreat from it before any suspicion touches him. Accompanied by his sister, Mrs. Ducie, he comes to Norfolk and takes The Lilacs on a

five or six years' lease. It would seem a curious, out-of-the-way place to come to," remarked Mr. Meath, looking off his note-book for a moment; "but no doubt Lennox knew what he was about, and I have very little doubt that the scheme has paid him handsomely. He must have known that there were many young men of family in this part of the country, some of them with more money than brains, and Captain Lennox having more brains than money was exactly the man to adjust the difference. It is a pity, sir, a great pity," added Mr. Meath, with a solemn shake of the head, "that so clever a rascal did not stop short at plucking pigeons, and leave the darker paths of villany untrodden. He might have gone on living as a gentleman and among gentlemen for years to come."

Edward Conroy had been thinking. There were some discrepancies in this history. "You speak of Lennox as a tuner of pianos and a hotel clerk, Mr. Meath; but he is undoubtedly a gentleman, one of education and in manners. I think he must have been born one."

"Little doubt of that, sir. 'Tis but another edition of the old story, I take it. Well-connected parents, expensive bringing-up, perhaps good launch in life—perhaps not good, through lack of funds: then temptation, weakness, ruin. Repudiated by friends; or perhaps friends gone. Then another start under a fresh name and from a lower rung of the ladder. Ah, sir, such cases are unfortunately all too common. This is a queer world, yet men must live in it."

Conroy silently assented. "How far, do you suppose, Mrs. Ducie has been implicated in these unpleasant matters?"

The private detective shook his head. "Sir, I can't answer that. We have made no discovery against her as yet; neither do we care to push any. She is much attached to her brother, and she has clung to him in her sisterly affection. It can hardly be that she has lived with her eyes shut; any way, as to his making money by fleecing the world at cards. Whether she has known of worse things, I can't say. If so, one could not expect her to denounce him: but she must have walked upon thorns. Her husband was an officer in the army; he died young, and left her with a fair income—which is hers still. People like her, and she has some good acquaintances. So has the Captain, for that matter."

"What do you purpose doing next?" asked Conroy.

"Well, sir, my next move—though I don't say when it will take place, either this day or that day—will be to apply for a search-warrant, and go quietly over The Lilacs: into every hole and corner of it."

"With any particular object in view?"

"Yes, sir, a very particular one. I hope to find there a malachite-and-gold sleeve-link, to match the one that was found upon the gravel at Heron Dyke."

Conroy smiled: this appeared to him to be so improbable a hope.

"You cannot expect to find it. Knowing, as he must have known, that he had lost the one sleeve-link in the struggle with Hubert Stone, Lennox's first care would be to effectually hide its fellow."

"Let me tell you, Mr. Conroy, that the chances are he *didn't*. These criminals are always making some fatal mistake. And that's a very common one—the not doing away, effectually as you are pleased to term it, sir,—and it's an apt word,—with the proofs that might destroy them."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### TOGETHER AT LAST.

SUNDRY matters had been taking place concerning Philip Cleeve which might well have been told previously. It was on a Wednesday morning that Philip started for London; on business, as Lady Cleeve was led to suppose, connected with Mr. Tiplady's office. On Thursday evening Lady Cleeve waited up to welcome her son's return. But he did not come.

"He must be staying in town to spend the evening with Mr. Bootle," she said to herself. "I shall have a letter in the morning."

The morning brought neither letter nor message from the truant, and Lady Cleeve sent her breakfast away nearly untasted. "After all," she thought, "seeing that he will return to-day, he probably hardly thought it worth while to write."

But when Friday evening passed away and still Philip came not, and when Saturday morning's post brought her no letter, then Lady Cleeve became seriously alarmed. Business might, of course, be detaining him; she knew that; but why did he not write? And Philip, as she believed, was so ultra-dutiful.

"I will send to Mr. Tiplady, and risk it," she thought. She would have sent to enquire before, only Philip had so intense a dislike to be what he called looked after. Once, when he had stayed away at Norwich a day or two beyond the time of coming home, she had gone herself to the office, and Philip was angry about it.

"Bridget," she said, calling to the maid who had waited upon her for many years, and who was as well known at Nullington as Lady Cleeve herself, "you shall go and enquire at the office when they expect Mr. Cleeve to come home. You can say, if you like, that I am a little uneasy at not hearing from him."

Away went Bridget, in her warm Scotch plaid shawl and black coal-scuttle bonnet. Mr. Tiplady was standing at the office-door, looking up and down the street. Bridget gave her lady's message.

"Lady Cleeve sent you to me to enquire about the movements of Mr. Philip," cried the architect, after listening. "I was just going to send to ask Lady Cleeve the same question."

This famous architect, renowned in more counties than one, was a

kindly, unpretending man, small and slight, and chary of speech in general. He took off his hat to push back the few scanty grey hairs left on his head as he looked at the servant.

"My lady thought, sir, that you must know what was keeping Mr. Philip so long in London."

"I know nothing about it, Bridget. I don't know why he went. His absence is causing us some inconvenience."

Bridget, who was much in her mistress's confidence, could not make this out. "He went upon business for you, sir, did he not?"

"Not at all. Mr. Best here got a note from him on Wednesday morning, saying he had to run up to town on a little business, but should be back the following day. We have heard nothing of him since. Make my compliments to your lady and tell her this."

Lady Cleeve became actively alarmed now. All sorts of dire forebodings filled the mother's heart. London was a place beset with dangers in many ways: she had heard, and fully believed, that hardly a day passed but somebody or other was lost in it, and never heard of again.

Sending out to order a fly, she was set down at the office. Mr. Tiplady was in his private room then, and handed her to a seat.

"I would be only too glad to tell you what is detaining him, if I knew," said the little man kindly. "We supposed he had gone up upon some matter for yourself. Lost?—lost? no, no, dear Lady Cleeve; don't imagine anything so improbable as that. Philip is quite old enough to take care of himself."

"But what can he have gone to London for? And why should he have made a mystery of it?"

"Well, to say the truth, that's what I cannot quite understand. Best said a word to me this morning—he got it from young Plympton, I fancy—that Philip had been embarking money in some speculation, and—— Do you know anything about it?"

"Nothing," said Lady Cleeve.

"I'll call Best in," said the architect. But, upon going into an adjoining room, he found that Mr. Best had stepped out. So he brought in Richard Plympton. This young man, who had been placed in the architect's office as an "improver," was brother to Mr. Kettle's curate, and was a great friend of Philip's.

Young Plympton, after shaking hands with Lady Cleeve, told what he knew, thinking it right under present circumstances to do so: that Philip had bought some shares in a rich silver-mining company, the *Hermidadad*, and that he had gone up to town to see if he could not sell out again.

"Oh," said Mr. Tiplady, "embarked money in that, has he? I heard that same mine spoken of yesterday—quite incidentally."

"It is a very rich mine, is it not, sir?" cried young Plympton with enthusiasm.

"Very!" drily responded the architect.



"Captain Lennox got him the shares, sir. He is one of the directors, and has gone in for it himself largely."

"Sorry for him," cried Mr. Tiplady. "The mine has come to grief."

"No!" exclaimed the young man, opening his eyes widely. "You don't mean that, sir! Then"—a thought striking him—"it must be that which has been keeping Lennox so much in town lately."

"Ay, no doubt. That will do, Mr. Plympton. I wonder whether Philip has risked much upon this worthless thing?" added the architect to Lady Cleeve, as his clerk withdrew.

"It is sad news for me," she sighed, wiping her pale face. "We can soon ascertain, by enquiring at the bank how much money he has drawn out. Anything is better than that he should be *lost*."

"Of course," smiled Mr. Tiplady. "Still I don't myself see why this matter should be keeping Philip in London. It has been known to the public some days now. Shall I make the enquiry at the bank for you, Lady Cleeve?"

"If you will take the trouble. I shall be much obliged to you."

"I may want your authority before they'll answer me. I'm not quite sure, though: they know me for Philip's good friend."

It was arranged that he should get into the fly now with Lady Cleeve. The driver was directed to stop at the bank. Mr. Tiplady went in, and came out with a serious face.

"Will they not answer you?" cried Lady Cleeve.

"Oh yes; they made no difficulty about that."

"Well? How much has he drawn out?"

"Nearly every pound he had there."

So poor Lady Cleeve had to go home with her anxiety augmented, instead of lessened. Suppose Philip, in his dismay at the loss of all his money, should—should have done something rash!

Saturday wore itself away. The look on the mother's face was pitiful to see. She sat at the window which faced the entrance-gate, looking for one that did not appear. And when dusk had closed in she still sat on in the same spot, listening in the dark with straining eyes for the well-known footfall that was so long in coming.

Sunday morning came and with it the postman, for there was an early postal delivery on that day at Nullington. But there was no letter from Philip. Dr. Spreckley was in the act of brushing his hat preparatory to setting out for church, when in rushed Bridget. Her lady had suddenly been taken with one of her old attacks, and the Doctor must hasten to her.

Dr. Spreckley had another patient on his hands at that time—the Reverend Francis Kettle; he was laid up with gout. When Dr. Spreckley called there after church, he mentioned Lady Cleeve's illness to Maria.

"She had been getting on so well lately," he lamented. "Anxiety of mind has brought on this attack; nothing else."



"Anxiety of mind?" repeated Maria.

"Yes; all about that harum-scarum son of hers. He went to London on Wednesday last, and has never been heard of since. She is in a fine quandary, I can tell you, fancying some dreadful harm has come to him."

"But why should harm come to him?" asked Maria, her heart beating wildly.

"Why, indeed! He does harm enough to himself without its coming to him gratuitously. Been and spent all his money; made ducks and drakes of it."

"Oh!" gasped Maria. "*How?*"

"How!" returned the Doctor. "Well"—looking at Maria's tale-telling countenance—"been embarking a lot of it in some precious mining scheme, and the mine has blown up."

Maria went to Lady Cleeve's that afternoon. She found her very ill. Maria hid her own fears and forebodings, and spoke cheerfully and hopefully; although every now and then a blinding rush of tears would come into her eyes when she thought that perhaps in very truth she should never see Philip more on this side the grave. More than ever before, she seemed to realise how dear he was to her heart.

How many days of this terrible anxiety went on, neither of them cared to number. The Vicar was getting better now, though still confined to a sofa in his room, and Maria spent much of her time at Homedale. One morning there arrived a telegram addressed to Lady Cleeve. She signed to Maria to take the paper.

"No. 6, Maxwell Terrace, Wandsworth, London.

"From PHILIP CLEEVE.

"I have met with a slight accident, which will detain me in London for a few days yet. It is nothing serious, so do not be alarmed. Another message to-morrow."

"Thank heaven! my boy still lives. And yet it is strange why he has not written," mused Lady Cleeve, stretching out her hand for the paper. "He says, 'Another message to-morrow!' Why send a telegram when, if he were to post a letter this evening, it would reach me in the morning? He must be worse than he wishes me to know of; he must be so ill that he cannot write. He may be dying. And I cannot go to him!"

"I will go to him, dear Lady Cleeve!" said Maria, with a lovely flush on her cheeks.

"You, my dear!"

"Yes, I. I can go: papa is almost well now."

"But, my dear child, will it do for *you* to go? You——"

"I am his promised wife, and who has more right to be by his side at such a time as this than I have?" She flung herself into Lady Cleeve's arms, and the two wept together.

Maria lost no time. Before the astonished Vicar could say Yes or No, before he quite understood what the matter was, she was on her way to the railway-station.

A cab stopped that same evening at No. 6, Maxwell Terrace. Miss Kettle alighted, knocked, and enquired for Mr. Cleeve.

Before the servant had time to reply, a white-haired, ruddy-faced gentleman came out of a side-room. "Come inside, come inside," he said, as he peered at Maria through his spectacles. "Yes, Mr. Cleeve is under this roof. He is my guest, you know; and you, I presume, are some relation of his?" he added, as he led the way into the parlour. "Perhaps his sister?"

"No, not his sister," faltered Maria, the difficulties of her position suddenly presenting themselves. "I am not related to him."

"Not related to him!" repeated the old gentleman, gazing at her. But there was something so benevolent in the ruddy face, so kindly in the honest eyes, that Maria took heart and courage.

"I am his promised wife, sir," she said simply. "There was nobody but me to come."

"His promised wife, now! Bless my heart, but that's very nice, do you know. I never had a promised wife; I often wish that I had. My name's Marjoram, my dear—Josiah Marjoram, late of Bucklersbury, City; now retired, with nothing to do—nothing to do. It's hard work, though, sometimes."

"But about Philip—about Mr. Cleeve, sir?" said Maria, earnestly. "Is he very ill? I was to send a telegram to his mother if I got here in time. How was he hurt?"

"Sit down, my dear, and I will tell you all about it. It was as gallant a thing as ever I saw. I was standing at my drawing-room window one afternoon, whistling to myself, and thinking about nothing in particular, when all at once a hansom cab came dashing round the corner at a most furious rate. A little child was running across the road: it stumbled and fell: upon which a young man, who happened to be passing, and whom I had not noticed before, dashed into the road and seized the child in his arms. But he was too late; the cab was over him. The child escaped with a few bruises, but the young man was—well, let us put it, rather badly hurt. 'Take him to the hospital,' called out the people, running up. 'The only hospital he shall go to is my house,' I said to them: and into it he was carried. We found a name on some cards in his pocket-book, 'Mr. Cleeve,' but no address, so that I was unable to communicate with his friends."

"And he was too much injured to give you the address!"

"Just so: he was not sensible. But he is getting better now; oh, very much better," added the old gentleman briskly. "As a proof of it, it was he who dictated the telegram to Lady Cleeve this morning. My doctor and the one from London both say that with care we shall soon have him on his legs again now."

"I should like to see him, sir, if you please," said Maria faintly.

"So you shall, my dear ; so you shall, when I have spoken to the nurse. Meanwhile, my housekeeper, Mrs. Wale, a good, motherly old soul, shall show you to your room, to take your bonnet off. We prepared it for his mother, thinking she might come."

The old housekeeper came in curtsying. She supposed Maria to be Lady Cleeve's daughter. Maria took off her travelling things, and was then ready to see Philip. Mr. Marjoram opened the chamber door for her. She caught sight of a white face on the pillow, and two preternaturally large eyes, that stared at her as if she were a visitor from the dead. She bent her face on his.

"Oh, my dear one !" she murmured. "Thank heaven, I have found you at last !" And Maria made up her mind that she would not leave him again.

On the morning after Philip's first wretched night in London, when he was somewhat restored to common sense, he resolved to return to Nullington and confess his bereaved condition to his mother and to Tiplady. There was no help for it. But he thought that he ought once more to go to the Hermandad office in the City, and ascertain, if possible, whether the silver-mining prospect was absolutely hopeless.

The place was still shut up, and Philip could hear nothing. In coming away he met a gentleman whom he had seen at The Lilacs, an acquaintance of Captain Lennox and Mrs. Ducie. This gentleman had also put some money into the mine, and had come down to the City on the same errand as Philip.

"Lennox ? No, I can't tell you where he is ; I've not seen him here lately," he said, in answer to Philip's question. "Lennox is as hard hit as we are, I expect ; worse, in fact. He may be staying with those friends he has at Wandsworth : he is there sometimes."

"Can you give me their address ?"

"Why yes, I can. I spent an evening or two there with Lennox in the summer."

Philip took the address, and went to Wandsworth. He found the people, but could not hear anything of Captain Lennox ; they supposed him to be at Nullington. It was after leaving their house that Philip met with the accident.

When Philip had gained sufficient strength, he poured into Maria Kettle's ear all the story of his folly and ruin, the latter culminating with these dreadful mines. He was yet so weak and ill that when he had done he cried like a child. Maria pressed his hand to her soft, warm cheek, and soothed and comforted him.

"I think sometimes, Maria, that if you had not cast me off all this would not have happened," he continued ; "and yet how weak and foolish I have been all through, no one knows better than myself."

"I will never leave you again," she murmured, with scarlet cheeks : and they sealed the promise with a kiss.

"I shall always say, Maria, your father was very hard to me."

"Yes. But—the truth is, Philip, he has had more on his mind than he would speak of," she returned. "It was about ——"

"About what?" panted Philip, as she stopped.

"I am almost ashamed to mention it."

"You must tell me, now that you have begun to."

"Papa took up a notion that you were somehow concerned in those robberies which took place: his own purse, you know—and the Doctor's snuff-box—and the jewels."

Philip's large eyes grew larger as he stared at Maria. "Not that I stole them? You can't mean that!"

"I fear that he was afraid you did. Dr. Downes was also."

Philip lay without speaking, entranced in astonishment. Presently he burst into the strongest laugh his feeble state allowed.

"What a joke, Maria! They could not believe such a thing of me. I am Philip Cleeve."

The words imparted their own assurance. Though Maria had never needed to be assured.

"Did you think this?"

"Oh, Philip! Don't you know me better than that?"

"My dear, yes. Forgive the question. You say you will never leave me again, Maria: I bless you for that. If we could but be married here, and now, so that no adverse fate might ever more part us! Here and now!"

Maria's vivid blush was the only answer.

"But how could we live, now that our future is marred?" continued Philip. "As Tiplady's partner, I could have ensured you a good home; but the money which was to have secured that position, the twelve hundred pounds, is gone for good."

"I have two thousand pounds that I think you have not heard of, Philip," she said, in a low tone as she hid her face. "Mrs. Page left it to me. We will pay some of it over to Mr. Tiplady, in place of that which is lost."

"Maria!"

"Yes," she answered. "I have been intending it ever since I knew you were getting better. Do not fret after the money, Philip. Captain Lennox is worse off ——"

"Hang Captain Lennox!" interjected Philip. "But for him I should never have got into trouble of any kind."

"He had embarked, it is said, a great deal in this mine," added Maria. "People fancy that it is his loss in it which makes him think of giving up The Lilacs."

Romantic though old Mr. Marjoram showed himself to be, it yet may have surprised him to be told that the two young people enjoying his hospitality had determined to get married as soon as possible, while Philip still lay ill and helpless—if he, the kind, old gentleman, would only help them to accomplish it.

"Oh ho," said he. "Well, with all my heart. Your parents have destined you for one another from childhood, you tell me."

"That's quite true," said Philip, from his pillow.

"Philip will need careful tending for a long time to come, as you know, sir," spoke Maria, with soft red cheeks and downcast eyes; "and no one can tend him as a wife can. If you, sir, would be at the trouble of procuring a special licence for us, and—and Philip and I thought if you would not mind our being married here quietly some evening——"

Tears twinkled on the old gentleman's eyelashes. He drew Maria to him and pressed her to his heart, and she cried a little on his shoulder as she might have done on that of her father. Mr. Marjoram wished that Heaven had given him such a child.

Thus it fell out that, a few days later, a quiet wedding took place in the drawing-room of No. 6, Maxwell Terrace. Philip was lifted out of bed that day for the first time since his accident, and lay on a couch while the ceremony was performed. He looked desperately white and ill, poor fellow! but the light of perfect content shone in his eyes, and the old sweet smile that used to mark the Philip Cleeve of old days came and went continually on his lips. Mr. Marjoram gave away the bride; and his sister, a charming maiden lady of fifty, came all the way from Hertford to countenance the ceremony. And the old state of things then went on again. Poor helpless Philip lay in bed, and Maria waited on him.

But he seemed to get rapidly better now. And when sufficiently well to leave the good old man's hospitable roof, he and Maria went to a quiet seaside place lying on their way to Norfolk, that Philip might inhale the refreshing sea-breezes for a few days before returning home. At present he and his wife would stay with Lady Cleeve.

She, Lady Cleeve, was thankful in her heart for all that had happened, now that it had led to all this happiness. The Vicar, making up his mind at first to be very stern and high and mighty, broke down at the first interview. For one thing, his mind was at rest as to Philip's fancied participation in the robberies. Too much proof had been found at The Lilacs by Mr. Detective Meath, to admit of suspicion against anyone but Captain Lennox.

Dr. Downes snuff-box had turned up first. It was supposed the Captain had been afraid to get rid of it too quickly. Most of the jewels lost at Heron Dyke had been found there; and—the fellow sleeve-link of malachite-and-gold.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE DUSK OF EVENING.

NEVER had the good people of Nullington been so startled out of the ordinary quietude of their lives, as during the Christmastide to which

events have now brought us. The marriage, under somewhat romantic circumstances, of Philip Cleeve, with the coming home of himself and his bride, was but as a tame episode compared with the startling revelations in connection with Captain Lennox.

Both Captain Lennox and his sister had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed them up. They had been traced to London, but there the trail was lost, and it had not hitherto been found again. Lennox had never come back to complete the arrangements respecting the letting of the cottage to Mr. Norris. Something must have aroused his suspicions, and someone, probably one of his own servants, must have sent him timely information respecting the execution of the search-warrant. In any case, he was nowhere to be found after that day. Mr. Meath was at fault; the general police were at fault; and meanwhile the cottage remained in charge of the police.

Christmas at Heron Dyke could not well have been spent more quietly. Conroy was away for a few days about this time. Mrs. Carlyon and Ella went into the town occasionally to see Maria and Philip, and that was about their only dissipation.

"It must have been Captain Lennox who took the jewel-case out of my dressing-room that night at Bayswater," remarked Mrs. Carlyon one day. "And to think I could not get rid of an uneasy suspicion that it might have been poor Philip Cleeve who had taken it!"

Ella looked up in surprise. "Philip Cleeve!" she exclaimed.

"Well, yes; I am ashamed to say so, Ella. One day, a few weeks after the loss, when Captain Lennox was in town and calling upon me, he enquired whether the jewels had been found. In talking of the affair, he dropped a word—it was little more than one—which somehow turned my thoughts to Philip. The Captain caught it up again—as if he had let it drop inadvertently, and I did not pursue it. Since then, when I have heard at times how fast Philip was supposed to be spending money, at cards, billiards, and such like, that inadvertent word has returned to my mind doubtfully and most disagreeably."

"Do you suppose Captain Lennox wished you to think he accused Philip?"

"No," replied Mrs. Carlyon. "I think he wanted to instil a slight doubt of his possible guilt into my mind, so as to more completely throw any possible suspicion off himself. That is how I fancy it must have been."

"Aunt Gertrude," said Ella, musingly, "I wonder whether it was Captain Lennox who stole Freddy Bootle's watch and chain that same night—and then made out that his own purse was likewise stolen?"

"Nothing was ever much more sure than that," said Mrs. Carlyon. "The man must have lived by these speculations. And to think what a gentleman he was through it all!"



Conroy came back. And whatever minor elements of disquietude might make themselves felt now and again, there was a certain sweet fulness of content about Ella's life just now, that nothing could seriously affect. She had won the sweetest guerdon a woman can win, and all things else, whether pleasing or displeasing, seemed dwarfed in comparison with that one supreme fact. The more she saw of Conroy the more she seemed to find in him to love and appreciate. Day by day the choice she had made approved itself more fully to her heart. Even Mrs. Carlyon, now that she was domesticated daily with Conroy, no longer wondered at what she called Ella's infatuation.

It had been arranged that the marriage should take place early in spring. Ella wished to delay the event until the doubt as to the date of her uncle's death and her own rightful inheritance of the property should be cleared up; but Mr. Conroy urged that that was no good cause at all for any delay.

"Suppose," she said to him one day, "that after we are married, it should be discovered that I am not the true heiress, and Heron Dyke goes from me?"

"Well, what then?" he answered. "We should still have enough for comfort. You possess some income that is indisputably your own; and I daresay I could match it, in one way or another."

"By your newspaper work?"

"By that or other things. I have given up the newspapers for the present: am not sure that I shall take to them again. Be at rest, my dear, and trust to me. We shall be able to keep up a modest home, and a cow, and a pony carriage. What more can we want?"

"You are laughing at me, Edward."

"No, indeed. I only wish you not to be troubled about this property. It may be yours; or it may not be."

"I fancy you think it is *not* mine?"

"I fancy that if everybody possessed their legal rights, it would turn out to be at this moment Mr. Denison's. But we have yet no proof of that, and it may be that I am mistaken."

"The shortest way would be to give it up to him at once."

"My dear, Mr. Denison would not take it."

"Do you know Mr. Denison?"

"I have seen him. I know that he is a straightforward, honourable man."

Ella sighed. She wished the doubt could be solved. Mr. Conroy wished the same, though perhaps in a less ardent way. He held a secret conviction that Aaron was at the bottom of the plot, if there had been a plot.

Harsh, crabbed, and unsympathetic as was Aaron Stone both by nature and training, the shock of his grandson's sudden death, following not so long after that of the Squire, had not failed to leave its traces behind. In a few short months Aaron seemed to have grown



a dozen years older. He would have liked to follow his mistress about much as a faithful old mastiff might have done, gazing from the doors when she was in the grounds, moving restlessly about her chair at dinner. To Conroy he had taken umbrage, and would mutter to himself that a stranger man had no business at Heron Dyke: the best of 'em were but spies. "What do he do up in that north wing so much?" soliloquised the old man in the homely speech he was pleased to indulge in when off duty. "I see him, evening after evening, a-creeping softly up and a-creeping down again. What do he do it for? What's he looking after? Do the young mistress know of it, I wonder? Who can answer for't that he warn't in that theft o' the jewels? Yah! Spies!"

Of all the inmates of the Hall, the one least tolerant of Aaron's crotchets and failings was Mrs. Carlyon. On occasion she spoke of them.

"It is partly your fault, Ella: you give in to him so. Look at that senseless fancy he has taken up of having no men-servants in the house but himself! And you fall in with it."

"We have enough maids for the work, Aunt Gertrude."

"I am aware of that—I suppose we have not much less than half-a-score here, including your maid and mine. That is not the question. In your position, mistress of this grand old place, it behoves you to keep men-servants, as other people do. But because Aaron sets his face against it, you ——"

"It is not that, aunt," interrupted Ella. "What I thought right to do I should do, in spite of Aaron; believe that. It is the uncertainty in which things are that causes me to live quietly. Once I hear—if I ever do—that I am the rightful owner of Heron Dyke, you will find me make all changes that are suitable."

"This is a queer thing, Miss Ella," exclaimed Aaron, overtaking his mistress one afternoon in the new conservatory, "about that Captain Lennox. He must have been the villain who destroyed my poor boy. Ah, ma'am, but it's a terrible world!"

"I fear some of us find it so, Aaron."

"To think of it! Captain Lennox! But I never liked him, ma'am. I never liked that sharp, foxy face of his."

Ella mentally wondered whom the old man *had* liked.

"I mistrusted him, Miss Ella, from the first time I saw him. When a man talks to you so soft and silky-like, as the Captain did, and at the same time fixes you with such a pair of cruel, hungry-looking eyes, it is best to have nothing to do with him. I set such a man down as dangerous."

Miss Winter had herself always felt a secret distrust of Lennox without knowing the reason why. Perhaps, as Aaron had said, it was the contrast between his smooth, dulcet tones and the expression in his cold, hard-set glances: any way, she had never taken cordially to Captain Lennox.

"Your wife seems poorly to-day, Aaron?" she resumed, purposely quitting the other subject.

"She's more idiotic than ever," retorted Aaron, in an explosive tone. "I beg pardon, ma'am, but the old woman be enough to wear one's patience out."

Dorothy Stone seemed to live in a chronic state of fear. What was it that she was afraid of, her husband would angrily ask her—and the most he could make of her trembling answers was, that she was afraid of the "ghosts." Heron Dyke had become a fearsome place, she would say: any night she might meet Katherine Keen in the passages; or, maybe, the dead Squire. Aaron, quite beside himself with wrath at all this, threatened to shake her. Miss Winter would reason with her now and again; but the old woman's life had become a trouble to herself.

What little pleasure (a sadly negative one) she ever found in it was when she recalled all her grandson's perfections, and her past love for him. To this, she found sympathising listeners in the maids.

"Where was there another like him?" she would say, from the easy chair before the fire in her own sitting-room, a huge black bow on her muslin cap. "So bold, and handsome, and high-spirited—he was fit to match with any gentleman in the land."

"And so he was, ma'am," would make answer Phemie or Eliza.

"When was that vision of the hearse and headless horses ever known to show its warning for the poor and the serfs?" she would continue: "but it appeared for *him*."

For it was generally believed that not often was that dire portent visible to mortal eye except when the scion of some great family was about to be summoned hence; thus, as Dorothy looked upon it, the vision must be regarded as a species of honour. It was for Macbeth alone that the witches worked their spells and brewed their potions; their business lay not with the rabble rout that called him captain.

But there came an hour when, pondering upon these matters, it occurred to Edward Conroy, a shrewd reasoner, that more might be in this nervous terror of Dorothy's than she allowed to meet the eye. *What* was it that she was afraid of? He asked himself the question. Sitting by the blazing fire in her own parlour, or in the kitchen bright with sunlight, people around her within beck and call, it could not be that she feared to see a ghost there—that poor Katherine Keen in the spirit would walk in to confront her. Yet, that Dorothy would, and did, sit there often in the day-time in unmistakable terror, could not be disputed.

"Ella, how much does Dorothy know of the circumstances of your uncle's death?" Mr. Conroy took an opportunity of enquiring.

"Indeed, I cannot tell," replied Ella. "I have not liked to question her. I daresay she knows no more than we know."

"Um—that's as it may be. She was *here*, during all the time."

"Oh, yes, she was *here*."

"Rather a queer notion that of hers, which I hear she has taken up," continued Conroy after a long pause; "that she may meet the Squire's ghost if she goes near his old rooms at night."

"Dorothy was always so silly in that way. You have some motive, Edward, in saying this?"

"Yes, I have been watching Dorothy—waylaying her when she steals out to that little patch of herbs which she calls her own garden, and turning in at other times to her sitting-room, ostensibly to hold with her a bit of chat—and she gives me the impression of a woman who has something on her mind; something that will not allow her to rest. I don't mean her superstitious fancies. It is a more tangible fear—unless I am mistaken."

"A few days ago I found her crying and trembling," said Miss Winter. "She told me she had dozed off in her chair over her work and had had a dream which frightened her."

"Did she tell you what the dream was about?"

"No. Except that she thought she saw my uncle in it."

"Ah! It strikes me he is on her mind rather too much. I wish, Ella, you would put a few questions to her about the Squire, and let me be present."

"Not questions to alarm her, I suppose?"

"My dear, if she knows of nothing wrong in connection with that time, how could they alarm her?"

"True. I will ask her to-morrow morning. She shall come in to take my orders instead of my going to her."

The next morning, Dorothy, full of her cares for dinner, for she was still the housekeeper, and bustling enough in the early part of the day, was summoned to Miss Winter's presence. Mr. Conroy had come to the Hall betimes that day, and sat at the back of the room reading a newspaper.

Ella quietly gave her orders: and Dorothy received them intelligently as usual. In her own department as housekeeper, the woman was capable yet. "Is that all, Miss Ella?" she asked.

"All for now. I think of having a few friends to dinner soon; Mr. Philip Cleeve and his wife, and the Vicar; and Lady Cleeve, if she is able to come. Just half a dozen or so, besides ourselves—but I will talk to you of that to-morrow."

"Yes, ma'am," assented Dorothy, about to move away.

"Wait a moment," said her mistress. "I wish to ask you a question or two, Dorothy, about that Mrs. Dexter: the woman who nursed my uncle, as I hear, during his last illness. I wish to see Mrs. Dexter. Can you tell me where to find her?"

Dorothy's hands began to tremble as though she had been suddenly smitten with ague. She threw a look at her mistress so frightened and imploring, that the latter almost regretted she had spoken, and then she glanced beyond her at Mr. Conroy: but he seemed to see nothing but his newspaper.

"Where could I find Mrs. Dexter?" repeated Miss Winter.

"I don't know anything about Mrs. Dexter, ma'am," Dorothy whispered forth then in a twittering voice. "Nor do I ever wish to know."

"You did not like her, then, Dorothy?"

"I did not like her, ma'am."

Miss Winter rose. "Sit down, Dorothy," she said kindly; "you need not be put out. There, sit in that chair. And now tell me why you did not like Mrs. Dexter."

The trembling woman wiped her lips. "I can't tell why, ma'am. I didn't, and that's all I know. When she first come here with Dr. Jago, I was finely put out; hurt, if one may put it so. My nursing had been good enough for my master up to then, and I thought it might have been good enough still. I told the Doctor my mind."

"Dorothy," continued Miss Winter, after a pause of thought, "I have never questioned you about my uncle's death. The subject was a painful one, and I was more deeply grieved than I can express that I was not allowed to be here at the time. Did you see him up to the day of his death?"

"No," gasped Dorothy.

"When did you see him last? How long before he died?"

Again that same imploring look: but no answer.

"You must tell me, Dorothy."

"Not for weeks and weeks, ma'am," spoke the woman then, but with evident reluctance.

"That was strange, was it not?—considering that you were always so great a favourite with Uncle Gilbert."

Dorothy lifted the corner of her clean white linen apron, and wiped her face with trembling fingers. She seemed to gather a little courage. "When he had that Mrs. Dexter, ma'am, he didn't want me, I take it. She didn't let anybody go near the master."

"She kept him shut up behind the green baize doors, and would not let him be seen by anyone: that is what you mean?"

"That was just it, ma'am," assented Dorothy more eagerly.

"But they let you see him after he was dead—you who had been his faithful servant for so many years? Surely they let you look for the last time on that dear face so soon to be hidden for ever?"

"Not even then did they let me see him," she cried. "No, ma'am, not even then. It was cruel—cruel." She sighed and let fall her apron. All this was beginning to frighten her. Miss Winter stood in front of her.

"There was nothing going on behind those green baize doors, was there, Dorothy?" she asked in expressive tones, her eyes gazing straight into the woman's; "nothing that they wanted to keep from you, and from everyone?"

Dorothy flung up her arms with a sudden gesture of dismay. "Oh, mistress, ask me no more for heaven's sake!" she cried. "I know nothing; I have nothing to tell."

"Nothing?" repeated Miss Winter.

"No, ma'am, nothing." And the poor shaking woman looked so distressed as she crept to the door that Miss Winter let her escape.

"Ella," cried her lover quietly, rising from behind his newspaper, "it is from that woman we must get elucidation. She knows more than she dares to say. I am right: it is this trouble that is preying upon her mind."

"Certainly her manner is suggestive," assented Ella. "But look at her distress: how shall we get anything more from her?"

"We must consider of that," said Conroy.

"Of one thing I am persuaded: that she would never tell me what is not true."

"Under ordinary circumstances, no; I believe that. But she may be forced into it by Aaron and the rest of the conspirators."

"Oh Edward! Conspirators! Poor old Aaron!"

"Well, my dear, time will show. If that old man has not a weighty secret on his back, tell me that my name is not Conroy."

For a few days, after this, things went on in their usual state of quiet monotony: perhaps we might say *dis*-quiet, in the minds of some of its inmates. Dorothy went about her duties in a dazed manner: but nothing more was said to her.

Gradually, finding herself let alone, the scare, which seemed to have taken up its abode permanently on her face, began to leave it. "The young mistress must see that I can tell nothing," she told herself, "and she won't frighten me again by asking me to. Why should innocent folks suffer for the guilty? If that Dexter woman and that horrid Jago had but never come anigh this miserable house!"

Late one afternoon, when the bright sun had set and the dusk of the January evening was drawing on, there was heard a soft knock at the outer door which opened from the kitchen corridor into the shrubbery at the back of the Hall.

Dorothy was in her own room, adjoining the kitchen, the door between them standing partly open. She sat in the firelight, doing nothing; save idly watching Phemie, who was preparing her tea in the kitchen. Aaron and the coachman had driven off to Nullington in the dog-cart, to despatch some matter of business for Miss Winter.

"Wasn't that a knock at the shrubbery-door, Phemie?" asked Dorothy, raising her voice.

"Well, I thought I heard something," replied Phemie, the only servant at the moment in the kitchen. "I'll see directly, ma'am. It's only Jem."

Before Phemie could finish buttering the muffin she had been toasting, the gentle knock was heard at the door a second time. Phemie ran along the short passage and opened it. Expecting to see only the gardener's boy, she started back in some alarm at sight of the strange figure confronting her. Standing between the two lights,

one ruddy and home-like that streamed out of the kitchen doorway, the other pallid and ghastly that was dying slowly in the western sky, Phemie saw a tall and fierce-looking woman, tawny-skinned, and with bright black eyes. A scarlet kerchief was bound round the tangle of her black hair; a faded scarlet shawl was draped round her figure and knotted behind. Thick hoops of gold were in her ears; rings glittered on her yellow fingers. A gipsy fortune-teller without any doubt, as Phemie, after the first moment of surprise, at once felt assured. She had seen women attired somewhat like her in the country lanes round about. In her astonishment she did not speak. But the stranger did.

"Don't be afeard, honey. I am only an honest gipsy woman who has lost her way. I want to get to Nullington. Being uncertain o' the road, I thought I'd make bold to turn aside here and ask it."

"The road's as straight as you can go," answered Phemie.

"Ah, but it's you that have a pair of wicked bright brown eyes, my lass," whispered the gipsy; "it's you that will make some fine young man's heart ache. Cross the poor gipsy's hand with a bit o' silver, and she'll tell you your fortune true and fair."

Phemie would have liked her fortune told very well indeed: but she glanced back in the direction of Mrs. Stone's parlour beyond the kitchen. "I daren't do it," she answered: and tried to shut the door.

By this time two or three of the other girls had come up, and were gathering around. There ensued some laughing and giggling.

"I want to tell your fortunes," said the gipsy, touching one and another in a persuasive, friendly manner. "I heard there was some pretty young women at this place, and I came to it o' purpose. Take me into your bright kitchen there." And she walked boldly into it. The giggling servants followed her, and one of them dexterously drew to the door of Mrs. Stone's parlour. Phemie hurried in with the tea-tray, which she arranged on the round table; and in going out shut the door.

Bright sixpences were brought forth, hands were crossed with the silver, and the credulous girls listened to their "fortunes." Presently Dorothy Stone, sipping her tea and eating her muffin in quietness, became aware of some unusual sounds, as of murmurings, in the kitchen, interspersed with smothered bursts of laughter.

"What can it be?" thought Dorothy. "They be always up to some nonsense when Aaron's away."

Opening the door, she looked out upon the scene: the wild, formidable gipsy woman seated in her scarlet trappings; and half a dozen of the girls standing round her. Dorothy, very much startled at the moment, shrieked out, and the girls looked round.

"What be you all at there?" she called out in a tremor. "Who is that? Sally, this kitchen is not your place: what do you do in it?"

The kitchen-maid, who had been addressed because she was the



tallest and biggest, turned her laughing face. "Oh, missus, do ye not be angry now. We be only having our fortunes told. She do say as my man'll be a soldier, and I'll have to ride on the baggage waggin."

"I order you to be gone," said Dorothy to the gipsy, her quavering voice marring the implied authority in no small degree. "Go out of the house at once: how dared you come into it?"

The gipsy woman rose, showing her large white teeth, and strode to the door of the inner room. "Let the poor gipsy tell your fortune, good mistress," she said, with smiling lips and a curtsy.

For once Dorothy was roused to anger. "Go away, you bold woman," she cried shrilly. "Don't attempt to tell your lies to me. You have told enough to those silly girls."

The gipsy's face darkened, she strode a pace or two into the room. "I have been telling lies, have I? Well, then, let me tell the truth to you." And, bending her tall form, she whispered a few words rapidly in the old woman's ear.

Dorothy's face turned ashy white as she heard them. She sank back in her chair with a low cry.

"Is that the truth, or is it not?" asked the gipsy.

But Dorothy could not answer. She could only stare tremblingly and helplessly at the fortune-teller.

The gipsy turned to the wondering maids. "Shut that door and leave us together," she said in an imperious tone. "This good mistress here and I have something to say to each other."

The door was closed immediately, and the two women were left alone. The servants waited long enough to grow uncomfortable. What could that strange gipsy woman be doing with the old missis?

"We had better go in and see that all's right," at length spoke Phemie. "She may have frightened her into a fit."

At that moment the parlour door opened, and the gipsy came out. Shutting the door behind her, she strode through the kitchen without a word to the frightened group standing there, and departed by the shrubbery, as she had come.

The servants gazed into each others' faces in silence. Then, as with one accord, they opened the parlour door, and peeped in.

Dorothy Stone had her head bent on the table beside the tea-tray, and was sobbing tears, dreadful to hear, of fright, distress, and pain.

*(To be concluded.)*



## WILLIAM TYNDALE.

**I**T was on the borders of Wales, with the songs of the Cymri ringing close at hand, with the grand earnest heart of the English middle-classes of that day throbbing near his cradle, that William Tyndale was born. Such things, in truth, suited well his future story, for Tyndale was to be a great hero for God, and a noble thinker for man.

The child soon began to show something of what the man was to be. He quickly made his mark in his own narrow corner of the world. His favourite study was, at a very early age, the Bible, which his rapid acquisition of the Latin language soon opened to him. As he read the story of God's ancient people, or the precious promises of the New Testament, his bright, boyish wonder grew more and more keen that such a volume should be a sealed book to the nations.

In those days Oxford often served as a place of education for youths from the time when they left their mothers' sides with their balls and kites still in their hands, to the time when they stepped into early manhood, with a first love, or a first enthusiasm flashing from heart to brain. Tyndale's parents were able to give him a full course of liberal teaching, and so he was sent to the university while still a little lad, and did not leave it till years had ripened the fair blossom which was in him into fruit.

At Oxford, as he grew up, the union of his high scholarship with his blameless life began, gradually, to make his name known among both dons and undergraduates. There was something about young Tyndale, too, which drew hearts towards him, and he won as much love as he did honour. But the quiet, studious hours, and the hours of genial, social intercourse of his college days, could not go on for ever. His parents could not afford to keep him in a life of learned idleness when his education was completed. He must choose his path in the world, and must try to win a foremost place upon it. Accordingly he left Oxford, and determined to become a teacher of the young.

The best opening in those days for a young man who followed this profession was to get a tutorship in the family of some nobleman or country gentleman of position. Tyndale's reputation soon gained for him such a situation in the house of a Gloucestershire knight named Welch, and thither he went to reside, and to take his pupils in charge. There, between his duties as tutor, he had much leisure for carrying on his own favourite studies; studies which were very deep and very earnest in their character; studies which led him to look down into the religious teaching of the Roman Catholic

Church, and to feel how much it was wanting in breadth and light.

The spirit of the reformers was already afoot in Europe, and a strong breeze, which came from it, blew full upon William Tyndale in his retired English dwelling-place. Very soon he began so to glow and burn with the light which was in him, that he could not keep it entirely to himself; in after-dinner discussions, or in chance meetings at neighbours' houses, he showed the Gloucestershire clergy something of his mind, and quickly woke up their opposition. The strong brain and keen tongue of Tyndale made him generally the victor in these word conflicts; this embittered the feelings of the priests against him, and before long their hatred blazed out towards him on every side.

It was at this period that Tyndale spoke those celebrated words which form, as it were, the text to the labours of his whole life. He was arguing with some great Roman Catholic divine about the rights of the Pope to rule the whole Church of God. The priest cried in the heat of his zeal: "We could do better without the laws of God, than without the laws of the Pope."

The expression stirred up in a moment the spirit of Tyndale, and he exclaimed: "Say what you will about the laws of the Pope, but I tell you that, in a few years, every boy that follows the plough in England, shall know more about the law of God than you do."

From that day forward the plan of making a complete version of the Bible in English began to shape itself in William Tyndale's mind.

Tyndale received little support and encouragement in his bold assertion of liberal, reformed opinions from the family with whom he lived. Welch and his wife rise up before us as very distinct figures as we look back at them; and they are figures that seem to have scant sympathy with the young champion of spiritual religion. The knight was a jolly country gentleman, who had but few and scattered ideas beyond his stable and his cellar. He had the haziest notion possible as to what his young tutor was making such a tumult in the neighbourhood about; but he had a sort of idea that the matter in hand concerned some innovation, and anything new was always contrary to the worthy gentleman's nature. Besides, the knight could not in the least understand how a young man, who sat at a good table every day, who had money enough in his pocket to buy two new doublets every year, could be so utterly wanting in common-sense as to go about the country getting himself into trouble by prating about all sorts of new-fangled trash. No; he had decidedly no patience with his house-tutor.

As for the lady, we can see her as plainly as if she had just stepped out of an old worm-eaten picture, come rustling in flowered brocade down the oak-panelled passages, with eye and ear alert to catch shortcomings on the part of her serving-men and maids; with

mind intent on calculating how much less spice can be put into this week's venison pasty, without her lord, who has a decided taste for good cookery, finding it out; with her drowsy soul only peeping, at intervals, out of her placid, meaningless glance. Such was the woman in whose family Tyndale was unlucky enough to have found a home. Little can we wonder that, if it had not been for his high, bright hopes, and his well-loved studies, and the triumphs which from time to time he gained in theological disputes, he would have found life itself no easy task.

At length the uncongeniality of the people with whom he lived, and the fierce enmity of the neighbouring clergy, made Tyndale resolve to leave Gloucestershire. He wanted, also, to see a little more of the world, and to make some further use of his talents, than he could do buried in a retired country district. He therefore went to London.

His first act on reaching the capital is very characteristic of the age. One morning, there stood at the door of Sir Henry Gilford, who held a high office under the King, a shy-looking young man, who had never been a visitor at the grand house before. The gold-laced lacqueys, standing in the entrance-hall gossiping about the affairs of the lords and ladies they waited on last night at supper, hardly knew whether to laugh at his awkward manner, and the country cut of his coat, or to be angry at the trouble he gave them in announcing his presence to their master. Who could suppose that Sir Henry would receive, at this early hour, a fellow from Gloucester, by the unknown name of Tyndale? Sir Henry did, however, actually say that he was to be shown into the library to await his coming, and thither one of the lacqueys, having put on as dignifiedly patronising an air as he could, conducted him.

It was certainly no comfortable half-hour which poor Tyndale spent waiting the great man's coming; he could do nothing but pull out of his pocket the translation of some Greek author, the MS. of which he had brought with him as a sort of credential, and stare at it, until his own handwriting became the most wearisome and distasteful thing to him in the world.

At length Sir Henry appeared in his velvet morning-gown, and was more gracious than might have been expected. He had heard of Tyndale, through a friend, as a young man of promise. He glanced at the MS.; that was all, notwithstanding all the pains that had been taken to make it fair and primly neat: yet still he did glance at it, and vouchsafed to say it was a pretty bit of scholarship. Then he promised Tyndale he would try to get him a place in the household of Tonstall, Bishop of London, and dismissed him with a nod.

This promise of preferment came, however, at last to nothing; the Bishop said that his palace was too full already of dependents, and advised the young man to seek an entrance into life elsewhere; he could not do anything for him.

Tyndale lingered for a year or more in London, hoping, but hoping in vain, that his friends in power would do something for him. During this period he had ample opportunity to notice the corruptions that had crept into the Church among her higher dignitaries, and he was more resolved than ever to do his utmost to let the light of purer truth shine in upon England.

A great desire now seized him to go abroad and hold communion with those men who had first set up the standard of the Reformation; surely they would help him in the work he longed to take in hand—the work of translating the Scriptures. He had a rich and enlightened friend in Humphrey Munmouth; to him he went, and told him all that was in his heart, and Munmouth generously offered to supply him with funds for his foreign journey. Other gentlemen of the reformed persuasion also gave him substantial help towards the carrying out of his undertaking, and Tyndale left the shores of England with no lack of gold in his pocket.

In the earnest, yet active, religious life of the German Reformers Tyndale found, for the first time in his experience, an atmosphere entirely congenial to him. We can catch something more than a glimpse of this fair chapter in his story, and we may pause, for a moment, to glance at the picture.

The western sky is glowing as if an angel has just passed that way, the city lies wrapped in soft golden mist, and the air is full of sweetness of sabbath chimes. In the garden, where the noise of the town comes, through distance, as a gentle hum, and where the little breezes creep about bearing perfumed messages from field and forest, a small group are sitting. How eagerly those two men are talking together: they seem spell-bound by the very power of their own words. "What a rugged, harsh face," we say, as we gaze at the elder of them. But let us look a little longer, and then what are our words? "How his eyes burn and flash," we cry out; "it seems as if the lamp of the soul within him were all on fire." By-and-by we find ourselves adding, "What a gracious, kindly mouth; surely what it speaks must be as full of loving tenderness as it is of wisdom."

Yes, we are right; Martin Luther has quite as much heart as he has mind. And with what depth of reverent affection in his eyes does his companion turn to Luther—the short, slight man, whose face counts so many lines for his young years. Yes, William Tyndale's features have written on them all the days and nights of hard study he has gone through: yet that smile, which is now gleaming on it, has something in it of almost boyish brightness.

But what is that soft, dropping sound close at hand? We turn, and see a lady, who is employed in diligently shelling peas into a dish; the occupation certainly seems to have nothing in common with the talk going on hard by, and yet her figure, somehow, exactly fits into her surroundings, and we feel that the picture would be incomplete without her. At first sight, there is something in the

prim outline of the folds of the dark dress, and in the delicate neatness of the frills of the white cap, which make us feel sure she is on the safe road to being an old maid. But one look into her face shows us that there is nothing but motherhood in the eyes with which she is watching the fairy gambols of the child playing at her feet; the little creature who has so much of a fresh, sweet bud about her, that it seems quite natural she should make playfellows of the flowers.

The lady has scarcely spoken since the little party settled themselves in the garden, but still, for all the attention that she is giving the peas and the child, we are sure, from the quick, changeful play of her shrewd, strongly-marked features, that she is following, silently, the whole conversation of her companions. And so time glides on, and the grand, sweet talk of those two is talked out, and all the peas are shelled, and Luther calls to his Kate, as the twilight falls, to go and prepare supper, and bids his little Madalena come and sit on his knee to say her evening hymn.

When Tyndale left Germany he went into the Netherlands, where he lived for some time at Antwerp. There he wrote, and sent over to England for publication, his two best known books: "Obedience in Man" and "The Wicked Mammon," both of which did good service for the Reformed cause in that day; and there he set to work upon his long premeditated translation of the Bible. He began with the New Testament, and then went on to the five books of the Pentateuch, to each of which he wrote an introduction full of learning and deep religious earnestness.

From Antwerp, Tyndale started to go by sea to Hamburg, there to meet a highly-gifted Englishman called Coverdale, a man who held the Reformed doctrines, and was deeply versed in the study of the Scriptures. Tyndale wanted to read over with him his translations, before he published them. On his way the ship in which he sailed was wrecked, and he and all on board were in danger of losing their lives. It was not, however, his own personal peril which appeared most to disturb Tyndale; his companions in misfortune were filled with no small astonishment when they saw the young Englishman rushing wildly into the raging surf to save, what seemed to them, nothing but a bundle of worthless waste paper. That bundle was his precious Bible translation; the poor scholar strove in vain to rescue it; and the labour of many a weary day, and many a sleepless night, was all lost in a moment before his very eyes.

Even this disaster could not daunt the brave spirit of Tyndale. His resolute will upheld him, and when at length he reached Hamburg in safety, he at once set to work again at his translation. He found Coverdale waiting for him there, and the coadjutorship of this true friend, and solidly-endowed man of learning, was no slight support and comfort to Tyndale in his twice-undertaken task.

At Hamburg the two Englishmen lodged in the house of a certain Mistress Margaret van Emmerson. We do not know whether this lady

was young or old, fair or ill-favoured, of low or gentle birth. But we may be quite sure that she was a brave woman, who was strongly attached to the cause of the Reformers, or she would not have received Tyndale and Coverdale as guests. We can fancy with what pride, and lively interest, she must have stolen into the room where, beneath her roof, the two great servants of God were poring over their writing, to ask how the glorious work was getting on. We can fancy, too, how the good lady vexed the souls of pages and waiting-maids by strict injunctions to speak softly and tread lightly as they passed the door of that important chamber.

When Tyndale and Coverdale had completed their task, Tyndale left Hamburg, and went back again to Antwerp, from whence he sent his translation over, as he had done his other books, to be published in England. The effect produced by its appearance among Englishmen of all ranks was great. It was like a blaze of light being let in upon the nation. The Roman Catholic clergy were at once enraged and alarmed, and quickly made up their minds that Tyndale was too dangerous a man to be allowed to live unmolested even in a foreign land.

Accordingly they sent a secret agent over to the Netherlands: a smooth-tongued, snake-like fellow, called Philips, who managed to lodge in the very same house with Tyndale at Antwerp. Tyndale's simple, trustful nature made it easy for Philips to creep into his confidence; he received him with pleasure as a countryman, and made close friends with him as such. His landlord suspected the man's intention, and warned Tyndale against him; but all in vain; he would not heed him. The result was fatal for Tyndale; Philips had him arrested and confined in the castle of Filford.

Then the end drew on fast. Tyndale went through a mock trial, and behaved with the calm courage of a Christian hero. He was of course condemned, and, in spite of the efforts made by his friends to save him, he went with the crown of martyrdom from his work on earth to his rest above.

ALICE KING.





## MARGARET THORN.

"THERE'S nothing half so sweet in life, As Love's young dream," sang George Arcastle, as he stood outside the low cottage gate in the autumn twilight. "Do you believe that, Daisy?"

The girl, who stood just inside it, her clasped hands resting lightly on his arm as he bent over her, laughed a low, contented, childish laugh, which told a tale of quiet happiness.

"I don't know whether I believe it, or not," she answered. "But,"—timidly—"I believe in you."

Was it her fancy, or did a cloud pass over the handsome face above her? She thought so at first, but the smile which came close upon it made her doubt.

"What a dear little girl it is," he exclaimed, touching her pink cheek softly. "What a dear little innocent heart!"

She looked at him shyly, a sidewise, bird-like look, which made her pet name seem most aptly given, for he often called her Birdie.

"Don't laugh at me," she pleaded. "Ought I not to believe in you?"

He bent to kiss her. "Yes, yes, believe in me, little one. I would not make a jest of you for the world. I must not keep you longer: the dew is falling, and your dress is damp already. Good-night."

"So soon!" If the lips did not express the words, the sweet face showed her disappointment. "Shall I see you to-morrow, George?" she asked.

"Probably. I'll not promise, so don't be disappointed if I fail."

"But why should you fail?" she asked, wondering how he could like to tantalize her.

"Would you know, my dear one? It is because I shall have to be away to-morrow—to see some people staying at the great fashionable seaside place two miles off us. Good-night again."

Daisy stood for a few moments, looking at the sea in front of her, still to-night; and then went into the cottage with a happy heart.

"So Mr. Arcastle has gone," said her father, laying his paper aside with a little sigh of satisfaction; "we can have a quiet evening together, you and I. By the way, Daisy, this sea air is doing wonders for you, you are actually growing rosy. I am glad we came; and it was lucky, our getting these cheap, pretty little lodgings, wasn't it?"

"Yes," answered Daisy. "Everything has come about very happily for us, papa, very happily indeed."

"One thing troubles me, Daisy," he said, a little anxiously; "after the pure air of the country, you will not like London."

"Never fear for me, papa; I am not going to dislike anything."



And, besides, we have two weeks yet to enjoy of these lovely seaside breezes, so we need not think of any worry that is to come. Papa, I will play for you if you like—music sounds best in the twilight—and you shall lie and listen and go to sleep if you will."

There was an old piano in the room by the window; it was not much now, but it had a sweet tone. And Daisy, sitting to it in the darkness, translated the language of her happy heart into music.

"Two weeks more," she had said. Two weeks of love and happiness. But those two weeks passed all too quickly, and at last, before she fairly realized it, the last night of her stay in Fairsea came.

Nearly every day of that two weeks had brought George Arcastle to the little white cottage that stood nearly a mile from the village; sometimes but for a few short minutes—oftener for a longer stay.

Mr. George Arcastle, gentleman and man of the world, was fighting a battle with himself—and it was a very rare thing for Mr. Arcastle to do.

Cosmo Thorn, Daisy's father, was always glad to see the handsome, cheerful young fellow; and Daisy was shy and quiet always, and the welcome that shone in her eyes was not seen by the elder man.

On this the last afternoon, the clear brown eyes had a shadow in them; but the red lips smiled the while, and Daisy seemed very bright and cheerful. So much so that her father, stroking her soft hair, said, with a pleased look on his worn face, "My little girl is glad to go back again, after all. The prospect of living amidst bricks and mortar is not so gloomy as I thought." But the younger man, seeing the shadow, understood.

Just eight weeks before, in a solitary ramble he was taking along the shore, George Arcastle descried, far off on a high rock, cut off from land by the advancing tide, a slender, girlish figure, standing erect, and gazing straight out to sea.

"It is almost up to my waist already, and I can hardly hold on," she had answered in response to his call, and then she turned her face seaward again, and said no more.

Half an hour later Mr. Thorn, sitting in the shady porch of the little cottage, with his newspapers, was horrified, nay, almost paralyzed, by the sudden appearance of an excited and very wet young man, hatless and coatless, bearing in his arms a half-drowned figure, which proved to be his daughter, Daisy—a veritable Undine in appearance, but, for the time, unconscious of it all.

"The people directed me here, sir. They said the young lady lived here."

"Heaven bless me, yes!" cried the agitated father. "It is my child, and you have saved her!"

That was the way the acquaintance commenced, but it did not end. Daisy, when attired in dry raiment, proved to be so charming a girl, that George Arcastle could not resist the temptation of calling again and again to inquire whether the adventure had been pro-

ductive of harmful consequences, and after that of calling without any excuse whatever. For eight weeks this had gone on, and now the end of the summer had come, all too soon for Daisy.

"It must be good-night and good-bye this time," said George Arcastle, as they stood by the gate in the twilight, for she had strolled down the garden with him. "It has been a pleasant season here, has it not, Daisy?"

"Oh, so pleasant!" The sigh arrested, told how much the words meant. "Shall we ever see you again?" she asked timidly.

He paused before he spoke: knowing quite well that he wished to see her again, but that he ought not.

"I shall be in London during the winter, and will look you up," he said presently. "I have the address: Chelsea, or some such out-of-the-way"—Mr. Arcastle coughed to drown the words—"some such rural suburb of the great metropolis, is it not? Yes, I will certainly call upon you if you will allow me."

"I—papa will be very glad. Good-bye."

His own good-bye was whispered as he stooped to kiss her. And then she stood alone, her heart aching: for a separation, though it may be a short one, is hard to bear from one we love—and Margaret Thorn had learnt to love him with her whole soul.

Cosmo Thorn was an artist. He had owned a small rural patrimony in Northumberland, which brought him in next to nothing, save that there was a house to live in upon it; and he painted pictures for the rest. The patrimony had had to be sold piecemeal, the house the last; and then he and his daughter, who did not seem strong, went for a few weeks to Fairsea, before settling in London. In that great metropolitan town he hoped to obtain patronage. But his health had failed him strangely of late, and the future presented but an uncertain vista. He hoped to live; to live and work yet for Daisy's sake: two years ago he had buried her mother.

Their Chelsea lodgings were in Amity Place. For a few weeks they were busy in settling themselves in them; and the excitement, together with the gratification of looking at the picture galleries, did Mr. Thorn good. The landlady, Mrs. Wilson, a good-hearted, motherly woman, always busy, took genially to the pale, gentle artist, and to the no less gentle daughter, who had such pleasant, honest, sweet brown eyes and rather sad face.

But ere Mr. Thorn had well begun to work his health failed him again. The experienced landlady thought she saw symptoms of heart disease, and urged him to see a doctor. He would, he answered, if he did not soon get better—he supposed the thick, London air and the November fogs were affecting his breath.

"Daisy," he said one day, "I wonder we don't see anything of Mr. Arcastle. He told me he should call."

"Did he, papa?" she said, her cheeks flushing.

After the first week or two a little shadow had come into Daisy

eyes and rested there. It puzzled her father, and troubled him more than he would have confessed. She had of late taken a fancy to sit near the window, that she might see both sides of the road—the house stood back from it in a small garden: she started nervously at any unusual sound, and there was a look in her face as though she were watching for some one. If so, nobody ever came.

At last, one day, Mr. Thorn, coming up the stairs slowly and with the frequent pauses which of late were necessary to him, heard a man's voice in the room above, and on reaching the door George Arcastle rose to greet him. It needed only one glance at Daisy's face to tell the story of the past waiting and watching. And her father, settling down into his great chair with a little sigh, said to himself sadly, "Children grow so fast—so very fast."

After that the handsome face and figure might be seen often at Amity Place; George Arcastle came frequently, and Mr. Thorn, watching the two from his corner, noted his manner curiously.

He seemed very fond of Daisy always; but now and then there would arise a constraint in his manner, which was greatly at variance with the lover-like tenderness of other times.

"I must have a talk with him some day," thought Mr. Thorn; "though it is very disagreeable to have to speak upon such a subject. But I cannot let this go on if he does not mean anything—and if he does mean it, I must—must make some enquiries. He has told me he is a gentleman, and he appears to be rich; but beyond that I know nothing. He has always been silent about himself; never yet as much as hinted in what part of the world he lives."

Disagreeable tasks often get procrastinated, and just about this time Mr. Arcastle mentioned that he was going out of town to spend the Christmas: should probably be away a month. Daisy's face fell, but her father's brightened. "I'll not speak to him till he comes back," he said to himself; "and perhaps there may be no necessity to do it at all. He may never renew his acquaintanceship with us; and it may be all the better for Daisy in the end if he does not. There is a secretiveness about him that I don't like."

So Mr. Arcastle departed on his visit, and the father and daughter remained on in their solitary loneliness.

More than a month passed before he again appeared at Amity Place. Daisy met him with a white, sad face, and she wore a deep black dress that told its own story.

"He was buried yesterday," she gasped. "Only yesterday."

Mr. Arcastle had not an unfeeling heart. He was deeply shocked; and when Daisy grew a little calmer he got her to tell him some of the particulars. She sat back in her father's arm-chair as she did so, her thin hands clasped together.

"It was the very day after you were last here. Papa had been making ready to walk out; he was going to a picture dealer to see if he could get an order; I wished him good-bye, and went to my room

to fetch some work. When I came back he was sitting on the carpet here, his head on a chair; he had turned faint and fallen, he told me. Mrs. Wilson got a doctor in; he said papa must go to bed, or at least rest and be still, if he wanted to get better. From that day he never went out; never; instead of getting better he grew worse, and last Thursday—to-morrow will be a week—he died."

She seemed to recite this mechanically, a little sob catching her throat now and then. Mr. Arcastle drew a deep breath.

"I am deeply sorry. I wish I had been here to visit him!"

"Yes, if you had been! We had no one, you know."

"No one. And—what are you going to do now, Daisy?"

"Oh, that's all settled," she said, calmly. "I am painting water-colour drawings; little things on cardboard. They bring me in enough to live and to pay Mrs. Wilson. She lets me stay here for the present."

"A precarious living!" he exclaimed, with almost contemptuous disparagement. "And one that may fail you at any time."

"I think not," she answered. "While papa lay ill, I told him I should like to dispose of some of the water-colour drawings I had done when in Northumberland, and he bade me take two or three to a shop near the Strand, where they deal in such, and to say that I was his daughter. They liked the drawings, and bought two of them; they have taken more since then, and they say I cannot do better than go on painting them. Oh, I have no fear of getting on."

"And I suppose you sell these things for an old song?"

"They don't fetch much, it's true. But I am very industrious. See! here are two, ready to go in."

Opening a portfolio that lay on the table, she showed him two small water-colours. Mr. Arcastle was no judge of art; but he saw how pretty they were.

"Why that—that's a view at Fairsea!" he exclaimed, gazing at one of them.

"Yes," she sighed, "I did it from memory. Here is the cottage gate we used to stand at, and these are the rocks, and that's the sea in the distance."

"Perhaps these things are as well as anything else you could do for yourself at present," he acknowledged, as he laid the drawing down. And by-and-by he took his leave.

The days went on, and poor grieving Daisy began to see some sunshine in them. What with the constant occupation of her work, which she loved, and the occasional companionship of George Arcastle, life seemed to be growing bright again.

Sometimes, in the pleasant spring evenings, he would come and tempt her out for a walk: taking her into the quieter parts of the parks, or through some of the more solitary streets—never into frequented places. Daisy would lean on his arm, and glance up at his face in her happiness. Never a word did he give utterance to

in any degree to alarm her—how could he, to one so unsuspiciously innocent?—and Daisy thought that the world was Eden.

And he—he seemed happy, too, but in a fitful way that troubled Daisy a little sometimes; seasons of gaiety alternating with seasons of gloom. She could not understand them: and they began to torment her unreasonably; just like a shadow.

"I wish you would tell me what it is that troubles you," she said one evening, as he stood tapping idly on the window, after they got home from a walk. Generally speaking he left her at the door; this evening he came up-stairs. "I do not like to see you unhappy."

"Unhappy! My dear, do not get fanciful," he added, with a laugh—but, to Daisy's ears, it seemed forced.

She turned to light her wax candle—for the twilight was deepening into darkness—put it on the table, and took her bonnet off. George Arcastle turned sharply from the window, shook her hand, and wished her good-night.

Vaulting down the stairs, he was confronted by the landlady. Good Mrs. Wilson, full of bustling care though she was, had her ideas of right and wrong, and she intended to protect the friendless girl above, as far as it lay in her power.

"Right! perfectly so, Mrs. Wilson," he cried, in response to her few whispered words. "What else can you be thinking of?"

"Well, sir, I'd not like to doubt you. You were a friend, as I often remind myself, of the poor gentleman, her father. But you are not her brother, sir, and you are not, so far as I know, engaged to be her husband; and for any other, save one of those two relationships, I can't help saying that you are here over-much."

The front door was standing open, and the rays of the gas-lamp fell full on the honest face of the landlady. Mr. Arcastle, looking also full at her, paused.

"And what if I tell you, Mrs. Wilson, that I am engaged to be her husband? At any rate, that I intend very shortly to be so?"

"Then, sir, if it is so, I am only too glad to hear it. Do you really mean it, sir? Honour bright?"

"I do mean it," he answered, laughingly, as he turned away; "good-night."

"And that's pleasant news for a rainy day," thought the good landlady, as she gazed admiringly after him. "Somehow I didn't think it—and I had to take care of the child. He is so fine and fashionable—seems as if the world were made for him."

The next evening Mr. Arcastle came again to take Daisy for a walk. During its progress he asked her to become his wife. What answer could she make but "Yes."

It was a pleasant evening, just cold enough to make one's pulses tingle. George Arcastle was in the gayest of spirits, laughing and talking merrily as they sauntered along, he looking down upon her

in her quiet happiness. Her hand was within his arm, and he laid for a moment his own hand upon it.

"I wonder how many people in this town are as happy as we?" he said, laughing at the sweet face which glanced up at him. "Not many, are there, Birdie?" and "Birdie" clung a little closer to his arm by way of answer.

Turning the corner of the unfrequented street at this moment, his hand still resting upon hers, two fashionable-looking men met them unexpectedly. Mr. Arcastle snatched away his hand at once, and made as if he would have put Daisy off his arm; really it seemed so. The strangers nodded to him and walked on. It all passed in an instant, leaving Daisy struck with discomfort.

They had stared at her rudely. The look they both gave her was one of undisguised admiration, but it was a look which made the hot tears rush to her eyes. Without knowing that she had done anything wrong, she yet felt guilty and ashamed.

"George," she said, suppressing a little sob, "I do not care to walk any further; let us go back."

"Did those fellows startle you?" he cried, fiercely, a dark cloud settling on his face. "Hang them for their rudeness! But you were not afraid, Daisy—with me?"

His fierceness frightened her more than all: what could it mean?—but she answered earnestly, "No, not afraid—never afraid with you. Still, I would rather go back."

When they got in, George again went up with her. He sat down, made Daisy sit opposite to him, and asked her to marry him the following week.

She was too startled at first to reply. The following week!—when her father had not been dead—"Oh, George!" she gasped.

"Well, what is there to prevent it?"

"Not so soon, George, not so soon. I could not. Six months at least must elapse."

"Nonsense, Daisy. Recollect you have no one to take care of you here."

"I take care of myself."

"I tell you you are talking nonsense," he cried, angrily.

But for once Daisy had the courage to be firm. This was April; she would be married in June if he wished, but not before, she gently told him. Mr. Arcastle could not help himself; he went away in a temper, and Daisy sat down and indulged in a good cry.

Two days after he came again, and made his peace. Daisy, who had been rendered thoroughly miserable by the estrangement, conceded so far as to abate a week or two of the prolonged term, and promised to be his on the first of June. And when he said good-bye that night, he told her she would not see him again for a week or two; he was going to a place he had in Wales.

"Is it in Wales that we shall live?" she asked, timidly.



"I can't tell. I mean to take you travelling with me at first."

"Where?"

"Oh, half over the world. Good-bye, my darling," he concluded—and left his last kiss upon her lips.

Three or four days after this, Daisy was busy over her work, the little table drawn to the window, when Mrs. Wilson appeared, showing up a large, middle-aged woman, very handsomely dressed. Daisy rose; and the first thing this lady did was to put her hands on the girl's shoulders, the better to gaze upon her face.

"I should have known you, my dear, from your likeness to your father. Do you remember me, Margaret?"

"N—o."

"What, not remember your poor mother's cousin, Mrs. Grantley? I stayed some weeks with you the year before she died."

"But you have grown so stout," rose to Daisy's lips. She did not say so; the recollections of past years came over her, and she burst into tears. Mrs. Grantley gathered her to her bosom, and let her sob there.

"I have been a bird of passage since then," she said, "roaming about from place to place on the Continent. Coming over here a week or two ago, I went into Northumberland, and found your father had sold the old place, and was gone away; and I have been until now tracking you out. Margaret, why did he not write to me when he became embarrassed? I have plenty, and to spare."

"I think he did not know where you were, Aunt Grantley. And, if he had known—you remember how sensitive he was."

"Yes, I remember all that," returned Aunt Grantley—by which name Daisy had been taught to call her. "And I am afraid it may be true that he did not know where to write to me. Ah well, that's over and done with; from henceforth, Margaret, you must be to me as a daughter."

So this young girl's fortunes were changed. All in a moment. She felt herself something like Cinderella. She who had had to work for her bread, was suddenly converted into a young lady of consideration and an heiress; for Mrs. Grantley made no secret of where her money was already settled.

She carried Daisy off to the hotel she was staying at; in a week they would leave for Paris, in which fascinating city Mrs. Grantley meant to set up her chief home. Daisy, as yet, had not called up courage to tell her of Mr. Arcastle—but she must do so in a day or two—and she wished he would come back for it.

"You are going to the opera to-night, Daisy," said Mrs. Grantley, coming in one afternoon.

"Oh, aunt, how kind of you!"

"It is no kindness of mine, my dear. I met Lady Bell just now—you know, I think, what old friends we are, and we were together all

last summer in the Tyrol—and she invited me to her opera-box to-night. I spoke of you, and she said bring you by all means. We dine with her first. Have you ever been to the opera?"

"No, never."

"Ah, you will enjoy it then. It is 'Lucia.'"

Evening came. Daisy was entering the house in the wake of Lady Bell and Mrs. Grantley, when, putting down her hand in one of the corridors to catch up the train of her new black lace dress, her jet bracelet fell off her wrist, and she stooped to pick it up. Not at the first moment did she find it; her friends were then out of sight, and two gentlemen, passing, had turned to look at her, and seemed to be waiting.

"She is confoundedly pretty," cried the one to the other, not attempting to lower his voice. "Arcastle has taste; that's certain."

Involuntarily Daisy raised her eyes, and she met the same bold gaze which had frightened her so a few days before. The insolence of the stare made her turn crimson. "What have I ever done to them?" she asked herself; and she felt sick and faint, for they seemed to bar her passage forward.

"My dear, where are you?—What are you lingering for?" called out a voice at this juncture, and to her intense relief she saw the ladies coming back in search of her.

"I dropped my bracelet, Lady Bell," she answered, hastening forward: and the gentleman who had not spoken, spoke now to the other.

"You must be mistaken, Tom: what a fool you are! I thought it was not quite the same face."

"Ah, how do you do, Sir Thomas?" cried Lady Bell; and to Daisy's surprise, both the ladies and both the gentlemen were the next minute shaking hands together.

"I did not know you were in England, Mrs. Grantley," cried the one who had stared at Daisy.

"I am only here for a short time. Next week I go to Paris with my niece. Margaret, my dear, this is Sir Thomas Shelton." And the gentleman bowed to her with a deprecating grace that had never yet been offered to Daisy.

The curtain was rising as they took their places in the box. Daisy sat in a maze of enchantment. What with the magic scene before her, and the singing, and the glittering company crowding the house, she felt as one in a delightful dream. Only one thing did it want to make it perfect—the presence of George Arcastle.

A stir in the opposite box, empty until now, aroused her. A lady, tall and elegant, was entering it; and, evidently displeased at something, was complaining in rather too loud a tone to the box attendant. A certain haughtiness in her carriage, and a frown, which seemed to have become part of her dark beauty, attracted Daisy. The next moment, following her in, came another lady, and then

George Arcastle. A rush of red dyed Daisy's face, and she hastily spread her black fan out before it.

"There's George Arbuckle!" exclaimed old Lady Bell. "He is looking over here; he sees us."

She bowed, as did Mrs. Grantley. Daisy took a stealthy peep, and saw that the bows were given to her lover.

"Who did you say that gentleman is?" she asked of Lady Bell.

"That? That's Mr. Arbuckle."

"I—thought—his name was Arcastle," Daisy ventured to say, in her perplexity.

"It was Arcastle; and of course it is, so to say, Arcastle still. When he married, he had to take his wife's name, and drop his own. The names are ridiculously alike."

"His wife's name!" mechanically repeated Daisy, believing they must be speaking of two people. "Mr. Arcastle is not married."

"Indeed he is," replied Lady Bell. "That is his wife yonder, by whom he is sitting; and that other lady is her sister. They were co-heiresses, the Miss Arbuckles, very rich, and young Arcastle married the elder. He was not badly off himself, but her riches are immense. Where did you know him?"

"He—he was at the seaside last autumn when I was staying there with papa," gasped Daisy, feeling ready to faint with this dreadful revelation. "I do not think he was married then: he did not seem to be; he was by himself—and he called himself Arcastle."

Lady Bell smiled significantly. "He has been married these three years, my dear. As to being out alone, that is no uncommon thing; and it is said he is addicted to calling himself Arcastle still, and wishes he had never changed it for the other name. He and his wife do not agree very well, and he seeks his own amusements."

"Why does he not like her?" breathed Daisy.

"Ah—why? It is said he never did care for her, but her vast wealth dazzled him. And she has a harsh temper—and so, they quarrel. There, he is off! I knew he'd not sit long by her side."

"He cannot be a good man," mused Daisy, unconscious, perhaps, that she spoke aloud.

"As good as most other young men of the day, who are votaries of folly and fashion," spake old Lady Bell. "At least, I know nothing to the contrary."

"But she does not know what I could tell," groaned Daisy in her stricken heart. "What had I ever done to him that he should have sought to deceive me? I can understand the behaviour of those two friends of his now. Oh, what an escape it is! Heaven must have been watching over me."

"My dear, are you ill?" cried Lady Bell, chancing to look at Daisy when the opera was drawing towards its close. "You are as white as death—and nearly as still."

Daisy called up a wan smile, and shook her head. "I am not

ill, thank you. I never saw an opera before, or a play of any kind; and—and I am a little tired."

Before Daisy went to bed that night, she wrote a little note, and sealed it. In the morning, as soon as breakfast was over, she carried the note to the old lodgings at Chelsea and left it with Mrs. Wilson.

That same evening Mr. Arcastle called there. The house door happened to be open, and he went straight up to Daisy's old sitting-room. It was empty. It seemed to have been put into stiff order, as though it were not occupied just now. The light of the setting sun came in, and illumined his pale and handsome face.

"Where's she gone to, I wonder?" he fretfully cried. "About some of that drawing work of hers, I suppose! Holloa! oh, it is you, Mrs. Wilson. Miss Thorn is out, I perceive."

"Miss Thorn has left, sir; left for good."

"Left!" he exclaimed, his face flushing.

"Her grand relations have found her out, sir—for she and her father were of good family, as perhaps you know. And her aunt came down here in a beautiful carriage, and took Miss Daisy home to her."

"Do you know her name—the aunt's?" he asked, after a pause.

"It's Mrs. Grantley, sir. Miss Daisy came here this morning to say good-bye to me, for they are going to travel. She is very gay now; she was at the opera last night, she told me, with her aunt's old friend, Lady Bell, after having dined with her ——"

"At the opera!" interrupted Mr. Arcastle, recalling the bows he had given to Mrs. Grantley and Lady Bell across the house—and the young lady sitting with them, whose face he did not see. A deep flush rose to his own.

"And she thanked me so prettily and gratefully for all I had done for her while she lived here—which goodness knows was not much," continued Mrs. Wilson. "And she slid a ten-pound note into my hand, to buy something to remember her by, she prettily said, or to spend in any other way I liked. And she left this note with me, sir, and said would I give it to Mr. Arcastle if he chanced to call."

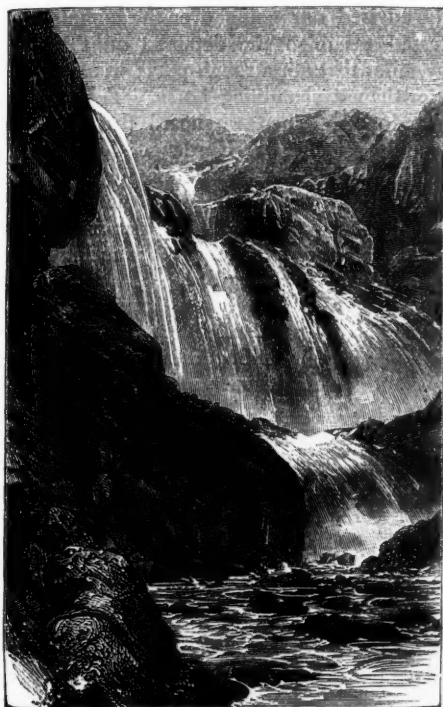
Leaving the note in his hand, the landlady left the room. It was addressed to George Arcastle. He broke the seal, and read a few words written therein, in a pitiful, trembling hand, so unlike Daisy's.

"I pray God to bless and keep you always. The truth is known to me; and I can never see you again. What had I done—what had papa done, that you should seek to serve us so? The matter is safe with me; I will never betray you. Good-bye, George Arbuckle; good-bye for ever.—M. T."

"God forgive me! and keep her from future evil!" he breathed; and went away, crushing the note in his hand.

## ABOUT NORWAY.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND."



IN THE HARDANGER.

OUR time in Norway was drawing to a close. We wished to be back in England by a certain day. Had a boat left Bergen at a convenient season, we might have contented ourselves with making a few of the many excursions that lie in the neighbourhood of the picturesque old town, and in due time have embarked from its shores. The Bergen steamer, however, for us, went by "the rules of contrary." It often happens so in life: and we have to preserve a calm exterior and an unruffled temper, by laying ourselves open, as it were, for small disappointments, and philosophically bal-

ancing the bitters against the sweets of existence. So when we found the Bergen boat would land us in England either a week sooner or a week later than was convenient, we looked afield for fresh plans.

And we found that by going to Christiania we should catch a steamer exactly suited to our purpose. This decided us. We would work our way round to the capital. If this entailed travelling in part over old ground, we should be glad to renew the impressions of our first days in Norway: days when the North Cape had yet to be done, the midnight sun to be seen, and all the small incidents of that pleasant voyage lay still in the mysterious future.

Now all our North Cape experience was over: our faces were set in an opposite direction. But as far as the interior of Norway was concerned our grandest scenes had yet to be encountered. There were several ways of getting back to Christiania, and as usual we had various opinions upon the point. Not in a single case did there seem any certainty as to the time of arriving at our destination. One advised the plain-sailing course of continuing our journey round the coast. Another strongly advised our going over the mountains by Thelemarken, but confessed we might be detained on the road; might have to walk many miles through a rough pass; at most would certainly get nothing better than a shambling horse. This doubtful prospect was at once abandoned. Then we heard that that very night a large steamer would go up the Hardanger-fjord, with a limited number of passengers: an excursion conducted, as Mrs. Malaprop would have said, in the most *researched* manner. The ordinary cheap steamer would start just before the larger one: and as the fares in the latter would be in accordance with the magnitude of the enterprise, there was no fear of overcrowding. She was said to be magnificently fitted up, and was moreover the largest vessel that had ever navigated the fjord. This sounded interesting and adventurous; and, as the schoolboys say in writing their home-letters, we availed ourselves of the favourable opportunity.

We had reached Bergen on the Friday night, and no sooner had landed, than, at the door of the hotel, we met two pedestrian acquaintances who had crossed over with us from London, and with whom we had parted at Christiania: they to take a walking tour into the interior: we to come round to Bergen on our way to the North Cape. Our lines had widely diverged, and now, singularly enough, had met again. They amused us that night with many of their experiences in remoter parts: small huts in desolate regions where they were entertained—supped, slept, and breakfasted for the sum of sixpence: other regions, again, where creeping bedfellows compelled them to turn out and roll themselves up in blankets upon the hard floor: a number of adventures more or less interesting that cannot be recorded here. At ten o'clock on Saturday morning they left Bergen, by the ordinary steamer that goes up the Hardanger. Their destination was Eide. At that early period of the day our plans were as yet unformed: we had not the remotest idea that before many hours were over we should follow in their footsteps: our destination also Eide. Half an hour after they left, we had settled our course. As it turned out, we could not have chosen more wisely.

We made the most of that day in Bergen, assured that we should see the picturesque old town no more. The heat was so intense that to look back upon the cold of the North Cape was like looking back upon an impression received in some far-off dream. The very stones of the streets smoked and cried aloud for water. The perambulating beer-carts drove a thriving trade as thirsty householders appeared



at their doorways and bartered for a double supply of the inoffensive beverage. For Norwegian beer, though refreshing, is mild.

In course of time we found ourselves at Herr T.'s, who, having never been himself to the North Cape, welcomed us as lions—in a small way. True, we had not discovered the North-East Passage, or penetrated to the North Pole; but there must be degrees of comparison in the world as long as it continues to roll. Greatness, after all, is often only a matter of opportunity.

Herr T. asked us many questions about the North Cape, and the various incidents of the voyage. These duly chronicled, we bade him farewell, and exchanged the grateful shade and coolness of his house for the outside heat and glare of the town. Next came the important event of dinner at Holdt's Hotel: a well-appointed table d'hôte, well attended. Soon after, it was time to start. At the last moment of course there was a great rush: there always is in last moments.

To make matters worse, the man who had charge of our luggage put it on to the wrong steamer: a boat going to remote regions, so crammed with passengers in every part that it was quite impossible to move about on deck. Then ensued an intelligent pantomime: we could not speak Norwegian; the man spoke nothing else. After much trouble, just as the gangway was being withdrawn, the luggage was discovered. A dame of wonderful dimensions, in a bright yellow gown and an excruciating head-dress of red ribbons and feathers that would have driven an Indian squaw mad with delight, had seized upon it and converted it into a seat. No doubt she was tired of standing: tired of being knocked and buffeted about on the crowded deck, with the thermometer at about 100 in the shade. Evidently, too, she thought possession nine points of the law; for it was only by main force that the porter succeeded in rescuing our property. Upon which the lady, with the calmness of despair, sank a step lower in the world and sat upon the deck. It was only by throwing the portmanteau on shore, and jumping for it ourselves, that we succeeded in landing.

Our own steamer was on the opposite side the harbour. This we now expected to lose. She was a large vessel, gay and lively with a number of flags, that hung limp and listless in the breezeless atmosphere. The owners of this new boat, by way of inauguration trip, had organised this excursion up the Hardanger. We jumped into a small boat, and made all haste towards her. But her third bell had rung, and long before we were half-way over, she was on the move. We were giving up hope and preparing to return, when one of the officers spied us out; the steps were hastily let down; in a few moments we were on board. It had been a race with time, and time for once had lost.

The beauty of the vessel had not been exaggerated. She was fitted up with every regard to taste and comfort. In the large horse-shoe saloon, resplendent with fresh gilding and luxurious velvet

cushions, the tables were spread for tea ; and, as usual, at least a hundred different cheeses, looking like huge cakes of brown soap, gladdened the eyes and quickened the pulses of the Norwegians. If they were to sit down to a meal without cheese, breakfast not excepted, they would expect after that the Deluge. At the farther end was a piano, which would no doubt be in demand later on in the evening. There were enough passengers on board to make the decks lively, but three times the number would not have overcrowded them.

Bergen looked hot and languid in the broad sunshine, as we steamed away ; sorry to bid it farewell, glad to leave its baking streets for the cool breezes of the water ; breezes begotten of our own rapid movement, for the air was still. Very soon the changing scene demanded all our attention, and with the fickleness of human nature we forgot for the moment all the pleasures and beauties of the past in those of the present.

Losing sight of Bergen, we entered the Hardanger-fjord. Passing upwards, the broad channel gradually narrowed, until we found ourselves in waters just wide enough to admit the steamer. The banks were lined with the most luxuriant vegetation. Crags and hillsides covered with verdure took almost the form of castellated ruins. We had seen nothing so romantic and beautiful in all Norway. Everywhere leaves glinted and rustled, and murmured their secrets to the fairy folk that certainly dwelt here. The sun, now somewhat low in the heavens, gilded everything with rich warmth and colouring. Then, passing through these narrow waters of enchantment, we wound in and around the mountains, amidst such sharp turnings that every moment it seemed as if we should strand upon the very mountains themselves, until the fjord opened out again into more space.

Evidently our steamer was causing great excitement. At every small settlement out rushed its handful of inhabitants, gazing at us with wonder and delirious joy, until we were out of sight. Occasionally we stopped at a station, landed a passenger or two, and went on our way again.

The hills and valleys opened up in greatest beauty. Not the ruggedness of so many parts of Norway ; not the grand severity of the Sognefjord, some of whose mountains rise bare, rugged and frowning to their very summits : but a soft, southern luxuriance : the fertility of a warmer clime and lower latitudes. Villages, at distant intervals, nestled in the slopes ; waterfalls dashed downwards into the fjord, with their everlasting monotone, sometimes dividing in their course, sometimes disappearing from sight before their course was ended. The more important falls of the Hardanger can only be seen by landing and walking some distance.

Nothing could be more strange and unfamiliar, nothing more interesting and romantic, than going up into the land, hour after

hour, in this large steamer, whose proper place, as it seemed, should rather have been the broad waters of mid-ocean. But this only made it the more unreal and delightful, as if we were going through a living experience of one of Hans Andersen's fairy-tales. Anything less like real life could not be imagined. We were in a dream, but a waking dream, in full possession of all our senses, able to revel in and grasp all the happiness of the fleeting present.

Not one of the least of the charms of this excursion was the fact that we could never see very far a-head of us. Entering narrow passages, one trembled for the safety of the vessel; marvelled how



VOSSEVANGEN.

she would pass through the ordeal; and then breathed freely again as, cunningly piloted, she turned a hidden corner and launched forth into wider waters. The windings of the fjord were so numerous and abrupt, we seemed for ever turning these corners, leaving one grand panorama only to enter upon another. At some of the stations, they treated us to a salute, in honour of our size; the vessel returned the compliment, and the echo of the guns went rolling up into the hills and lost itself in the far, very far distance.

Gradually, to our sorrow, twilight gave place to darkness. Nothing was left us of the beauties of the land but the outlines of the mountains, with here and there a white cataract finding its way to the dark waters below. The outlines were gigantic in the darkness of night; full of suggestions of mystery; full of strength and power;

full of a deep solemnity that seemed out of tune with the gaiety on board. For the passengers having come to amuse themselves were naturally of a lively and frolicsome turn of mind. Yet it was all quiet enough; liveliness without noise; laughter without riot; as befitted respectable citizens of Bergen: as characterised, moreover, an assemblage of Norwegians.

With darkness, music took up the tale: and a lady played some of the most entrancing music it had ever been my lot to hear. I do not know who she was: I know not whether she was aware of her power: but every line that lady played was full of genius. After going through some grand passages of Wagner and Beethoven, and the sweeter strains of Mendelssohn, she suddenly struck into an extempore performance, so wonderful that at least one of her audience was thrown into a dream that came to an end all too soon. In that performance, all our experience since leaving Bergen seemed to be put into music: in those notes, now calm and gliding, now wild and impassioned, one saw again all the beauties of the fjord. She ceased as suddenly as she began, plunging many into despair; for, with the perversity of genius, nothing would induce her to strike another note.

Going up on deck, we were just in time to witness an exhibition of fireworks. For some time, golden showers, rockets and blue lights enlivened the darkness, lighted up the mountains, and brought out the whole form of the vessel with weird and telling effect: intensifying the darkness as each display died out. The passengers grew enthusiastic, clapped and cheered, and were altogether charmed with their surprise—for the fireworks had been kept a close secret.

About one o'clock, when the darkness of the night was past, when there was the faintest suspicion of dawn in the East—it was hardly a suspicion—we entered the narrow waters leading up to Eide, and gradually, quietly, and gently came up to the landing-stage. Here the first person to greet us was one of our Bergen friends, who by some prophetic instinct had taken up the idea that we should arrive by this vessel. It was a happy thought, for before anyone could land he went off and secured us beds for the night. Others, less fortunate, had to go without, and put up with chairs, whilst one youth walked about throughout the night. We met him the next morning looking wild and haggard, pale as a washed-out ghost.

So that night at Eide we bid the steamer farewell, and she went on her way up the fjord. Our route towards Christiania would take us through Vossevangen, Gudvangen and the Sognefjord. And to every one who finds himself in this neighbourhood I would say: Go and do likewise. There will be neither regret nor disappointment: except the inevitable regret one feels when all good things, all delicious experiences come to an end.

When we awoke the next morning, our previous day's experience seemed more than ever a dream of beauty and enchantment rather

than a reality. And to a dream of beauty we awoke : for Eide in its situation and surroundings is little less.

Our quaint inn stood upon the border of the waters, nothing but the narrow road between. Upon the opposite shore were stretches of green fields backed by hills full of beauty and luxuriance. Great mountains rose to the left, leading towards Vossevangen, and into the unknown mysteries of the road we were soon to plunge. There was something about Eide strangely full of calmness and repose : a subtle soothing influence especially grateful to the spirit. The place was romantic, out of the common order, slender in houses and population ; so remote from the world—even the world of Norway—that one longed to spend here a month ; revelling in retirement, in all the beauties of nature, that seem, in this deserted spot, to address themselves to each one individually. Here you may pass your days in quiet contemplation ; or, if it please you, in whipping the stream hard by, so well stocked with trout that cry aloud to be taken.

We watched them from the rustic bridge lying idly amongst the stones, every now and then a more lively fellow rising to the surface as an unwary fly darted down to its fate. A vivid recollection of that Sunday morning, gorgeous with heat and sunshine, remains ; its quiet calm, its isolated position, its utter, soothing silence. Whilst we lay idly upon the banks, and like children threw stones into the waters for the pleasure of disturbing their bright unruffled surface, which reflected so vividly mountains and trees and sky : the bluest sky imaginable, that cast quite a celestial tinge upon the distant mountains.

The repose of Sunday seemed to lie upon everything, animate and inanimate. At twelve o'clock our two pedestrians started off on their way to Vossevangen, undeterred by heat or any other consideration. At two we were to follow them, in carriages. The Sunday in Norway is over by two o'clock, as far as religious purposes are concerned. If you travel from early morn till dewy eve it will neither offend nor surprise the prejudices of the people : but in the afternoon everyone travels who has need to do so. Again, as I have already said elsewhere, it frequently happens that you must travel on the Sunday whether you will or not, unless you are prepared to run the risk of throwing out of joint the whole plan of your journey.

We were not so prepared, and punctually at two o'clock our carriages were in readiness. We bid a reluctant farewell to Eide, devoutly hoping it might be our good fortune one day to see it again. Our road for a considerable distance skirted the borders of a lake : the mountains on one side, the calm water reflecting all surrounding objects on the other. It was a new, well-made road, smooth and level at first ; and our fresh little horses bowled along in earnest style, as if they too found happiness in this glorious day, these beauties of Nature, this hot, yet exhilarating air : a

combination that went through and through one's very being; making this drive through the everlasting hills almost as much an act of worship as that of the congregation in the little church in the distance, of which the spire cut sharply against a background of towering hills.

Presently we came up to the church and the village; a few houses nestled on the slope of the hill, where the road turns away from the borders of the lake. The church door was closed, all service over for another week. Small groups and couples were scattered along the road in picturesque Norwegian costumes: the "Sunday's best," that saw daylight only on high days and in the meantime was wrapped up in lavender: probably stowed away in some of those quaint, gaudy pieces of furniture all paint and flowers of unimaginable colours that seem to be heirlooms in these little households, and are handed down with care and reverence from one generation to another.

These groups and costumes on the road enlivened the journey; harmonized with the surrounding scenes; gave to the hills something of life and animation. Many were the couples spending their Sunday afternoon in long strolls—many, that is, for Norway: perhaps there were not twenty in all. No doubt some of them, with arms intertwined, were making love to each other, vowing eternal fidelity, and forming plans for the future. Humble plans, without ambition, or care, or desire to rise beyond that state of life to which they were called: but to them as full of meaning, of import, of prospective happiness, as the future of one into whose calculations it enters to destroy empires or build up thrones.

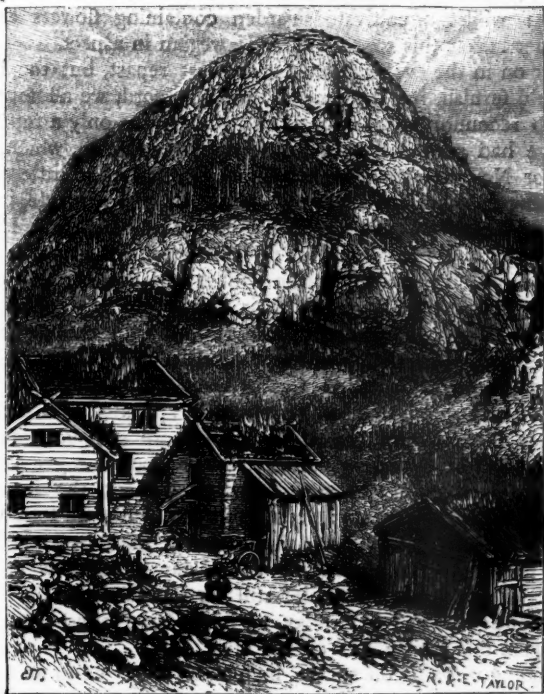
Presently commenced a sharp, very steep and winding ascent, which the horses had to take leisurely and with frequent pauses. We felt almost like flies going up a wall, as we gradually and with labour crept up this semi-perpendicular zigzag. To our left hand rose a flat, towering, gigantic wall of straight mountain rock, frowning, gloomy, and almost black. At length we reached the summit and commanded the magnificent view and the pass itself. With a little ammunition we might have kept a whole regiment of soldiers at bay. At our feet were the windings we had just ascended, like long-drawn steps cut out of the mountain side; a zigzag of rugged paths. Far below lay the lake, its calm blue waters stretching towards Eide, that we yet regretted. The little church and village reposed in the shelter of the mountain, safe from the storms of heaven, the tempests of earth.

We lingered long, resting the willing horses, satisfying our souls with beauty, and then turned our faces onwards. A descent more gradual than the late climb, took us once more into the valley, and our road now lay through a vast pine forest. The sun cast lights and shadows through the trees, grateful to the eye, tired with the glare of this unusually hot day: and grateful was the shade occasionally



thrown upon the road itself. Large pools of water lay here and there, so clear and placid one longed to plunge into their cool depths.

Nearing Vossevangen, the plain opened out into one of the most extensive views we had seen in Norway. Grand mountains and valleys lay in various directions: passes leading up into unknown regions—unknown as far as we were concerned. At our feet was the rich plain; and, as yet in the distance, reposed the village, lake, and



THE STATION AT STALHEIM.

church of Vossevangen. We were high above it all, but gradually, and with a long, sweeping road, descended from our bird's-eye view: the air growing hotter, the mountains seeming to rise and expand as we neared the dead level of the plain.

Our two friends had made good way. It was only within about five minutes of our destination that we overtook them. Passing through the village, which seemed quite a remnant of the world in comparison with Eide, we found it lively with the inhabitants, who had all turned out of doors this fine evening, and stood chatting in groups or idly lounging against the walls. Our arrival was a little

diversion for them, and created quite an excitement in a small way. The people stared after us, and a buzz arose, something like the noise of bees swarming. We left it all behind us, and soon found ourselves at Fleischer's Hotel on the outskirts of the village.

It is a very picturesque spot by the side of a large lake, in which there is said to be good trout fishing. The plain is extensive, rich and fertile, and the mountains rise in all directions, near and distant. The inn itself is on the slope of a hill: a hill clad with rich trailing verdure: whilst a cultivated garden containing flowers and fruit altogether makes this spot very un-Norwegian in aspect.

Later on in the evening, when a modest repast, but the best the inn could furnish, had become a fact on record, we all four sallied forth to reconnoitre the neighbourhood. It was only a repetition of what we had seen. First we inspected the church, which, though large for Norway and very ancient, contained very little that was interesting or worthy of note: unless it was a band of rude, irreverent girls rushing about the aisle and gallery and playing at Hide-and-Seek. Opposite the church we noticed a long range of buildings; stables, in which the congregation—those who come from a distance, as many of them do—put up their horses during service time on Sunday mornings. The quiet dead rested in the churchyard, many of the graves no doubt almost as old as the building itself: but the spot seemed held in small respect by the people.

Indeed the good folk of Vossevangen appeared rather of an exceptional type altogether: bolder and more daring, staring more rudely, and openly making their remarks: possessing evidently all the independence of the Scandinavians without the innate good breeding that characterizes so many of them. But we took into consideration that it was Sunday: they were in their best clothes, and out of their natural element. It was a day of idleness with them, and "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Had it been Monday instead of Sunday, we might have found them ordinary Norwegian folk: busy, and quietly civil.

Climbing upwards on to the high road, we came to an anchor on a pile of logs by the wayside, on the slope of the hill, and watched the sun descend and twilight creep over all. The mountains and the vales were all about us. The setting sun gilded the trees, and flushed the sky, which passed through all its phases of rich colours, until it faded to the colder tones of nightfall. A number of carriages dashed past, one after another; finally followed by a lumbering barouche holding four black-coated, dust-begrimed travellers, who looked hot and ill-tempered, and gazed suspiciously at us, as if they wondered whether we had taken up all the room and devoured all the food Vossevangen was capable of supplying. But Herr Fleischer was a man of resources, had a very keen eye to his own interests, and was equal to an emergency. We returned presently to find our quarters, so quiet when we had left, in possession of a

noisy band who were disposing of beer with as much earnestness as if they had just terminated a six weeks' fast.

We left Vossevangen the next morning, somehow with far less regret than we had quitted Eide. The landlord had given us horses for the whole distance, so that we should not have the trouble of changing. Our two walking friends were an hour ahead of us. It would take us, at least, seven or eight hours to accomplish our journey of twenty-eight English miles.

Between Vossevangen and Gudvangen the stations are some of the worst in Norway, where it would be impossible to pass the night except from necessity. The road is, for the most part, diversified and picturesque; but at the last station before reaching Gudvangen, Stalheim, a scene of grandeur and sublimity bursts upon the traveller perhaps not to be surpassed in the whole country.

We reached Stalheim about four in the afternoon, and waited here some time. One of the horses had cast a shoe: and the postboys, having to change the one horse, for some reason of their own thought they would change the other also. This was, perhaps, the roughest, rudest, and most unpleasant station we had seen in all Norway. Three or four men and women—the former looking like ruffians one would scarcely like to meet on a dark night: the latter only a degree better—were seated at a long deal table, taking their evening meal. An earthenware basin stood in the middle of the table, holding a hot, brown, greasy liquid that looked far from tempting. In this they dipped, sometimes one after the other, sometimes all together, a thick slice of sour black bread, which they held in their fingers; and occasionally fingers and all were immersed in the steaming liquid. Their faces became gradually smeared over with the same; and they eat more like animals than like human beings. If the reader is repelled by the description, what were we by the reality? In a very short time we found it advisable to back out of the room, and take up our standing on the doorstep in the broiling sun. Nearly an hour was wasted here, and then we continued our journey.

Passing upwards to the right, we suddenly came upon such a view as we had not yet seen in Norway. We found ourselves on the brow of a high, steep hill, gazing into a great depth, the Valley of Gudvangen. On either side, the mountains towered in gigantic masses, rising precipitously and in various forms. One pile behind and beyond another stretched far away. The valley itself was narrow, and in some places seemed only to give room for the road and the stream that ran beside it. The descent from our present position was steep and abrupt; managed by a series of zigzag paths cut out of the side of the precipice and called the Stalheimsclæft: a triumph of engineering skill in its way. So steep and abrupt it seemed, that involuntarily one's first instinct was to get out of the carriage for safety. This we had to do very soon, to ease the horses, who every now and then had to slip down a steep bit on all fours. On either

side the Stalheimsclift was a magnificent and most picturesque waterfall, tumbling about 1,000 feet of white foam into the stream below. The close proximity of these falls, at right angles with each other, and therefore fed from distinct sources, added much to the beauty of the scene.

We gradually descended this wonderful Jacob's ladder to the level of the valley. For more than an hour the road was a series of grand and overwhelming impressions. On either side, as the road wound round, the mountains continually seemed to close in and bar further progress. At length the valley expanded into a small plain; a few farms were passed; and then we came upon a cluster of houses which proved to be Gudvangen and our journey's end.

Gudvangen is situated at the head of the Naerofjord, the grandest and most picturesque branch of the Sogne. The village is shut in by towering mountains. Immediately in front of the inn, some 4,000 to 5,000 feet high, were three distinct falls, of which the body of water was at present small. It was now Monday evening, and we found that the steamer would not call until Wednesday. But we were not sorry of a day's rest in a spot so full of beauty, and with edifying resignation we abandoned ourselves to the inevitable.

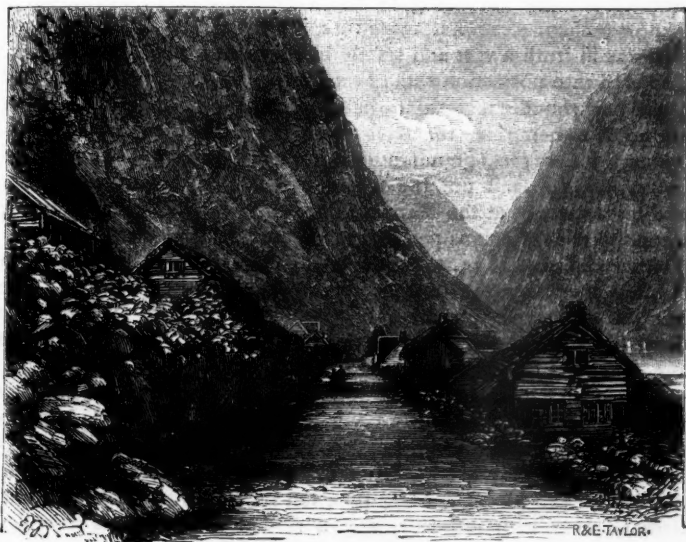
Our friends, the walkers (by nature, not by name), were only about an hour after us, having posted from Stalheim. Thus it would seem that in the matter of time, the tortoise, in Norway, might almost beat the hare. In other words, what with the walking pace of the horse: which now and then degenerates to crawling, seldom reaches more than four miles an hour, and sometimes does not get beyond two; what with the frequent stoppages of half an hour or an hour, occasionally expanding to three or four hours at a station: it is a matter of doubt whether pedestrians after all have not the best of it in Norway. At least they have full freedom and liberty: they can halt when and where they please, regulate their own pace: and at the end of the journey find themselves plus so much money not expended in posting: plus invigorated health and therefore happiness: minus—I know not what, unless shoe-leather fails them. But this applies only to strong men and good walkers. There are others to whom a walking expedition would only be a slow way of committing suicide: and these others not so few in number as the world may imagine.

That Tuesday was a very quiet, very pleasant day at Gudvangen. We spent the morning in voluptuous idleness, lying upon the grass under the fruit trees, looking up at the mountains, watching the water-falls, tracing forms in the white fleecy clouds that here and there floated across the sky, luxuriating in the heat and the sunshine above—so delicious to those who were in the shade and cool of the valley below.

We were in primitive but comfortable quarters at Schultz's hotel. The people were so obliging and civil, so anxious to do all in their power to please, that far less than we received would have satisfied

us. The landlord was away for the time being. His representative had been in America; learned English there; was suddenly taken with a desire for his mountain home (perhaps, too, he had not been particularly successful, but we did not like to be too inquisitive) and so returned. He was an amusing and original character: a little too free and easy for one's English ideas: but we made allowance for his training. He was really an honest, straightforward man, and had gained nothing of the sharpness which the Americans, whether they deserve it or not, have the credit of possessing.

So when the Wednesday morning came, and with it the steamer



GUDVANGEN.

that was to bear us away, we left Gudvangen with reluctance: its pleasant quarters, its magnificent surroundings, its studies of human nature. But time, "like an ever-rolling stream" runs on: and we had an allotted task to perform in a given period. Therefore, accompanied by a small crowd of friends we had made during our short stay—village natives who insisted upon seeing the last of us (a compliment capable of two interpretations) we all went on board the steamer.

Down the Naerofjord we steamed; through its dark gloomy waters; between its glorious mountains, sombre and frowning, yet often pine-clad to their very summit, casting their shadows into the depths of the impenetrable waters. Then, leaving all this behind us, we launched forth into the broad, open waters of the Sognefjord.

## LADY CONWAY AND VALENTINE GREAT- RAKE, THE STROKER.

BY C. J. LANGSTON.

**I**F the ancient house of Blakesmoor with its cheerful store-room, "in whose hot window-seat I used to sit and read Cowley," was dear to the gentle Elia, no less dear unto me was the lone and deserted mansion belonging to the Hertford family; about which I know perhaps somewhat more than most people.

It was in truth a vast and stately building into which, in a manner, I entered into possession some twenty-five years ago. Its spacious rooms and sounding corridors had scarcely given back the tread of the noble owners since the days when the Prince Regent had complimented our great-grandmothers during a rubber at whist in the library, and (oh, tell not the tradition in Gath!) looked very much like royal winking at the Marchioness in the family pew at Alcester, when the old rector was petitioning for the health of his dear papa.

Once since, in 1834, when the cholera was raging in London, even shaking its grimy fist in the haughty face of Belgravia, did the Marquis of Steyne remember his Warwickshire seat. "Death was busy (he said a much neater thing in French), the country was Bœotian; but he must be amused."

The lodge gates rolled back in trepidation like the little old lady who opened them. In the heavy barouche sate Monsieur le Marquis with his famous mastiff Pluto, by his side; and opposite was my Lady S——n, with her handsome daughter, to be dowered so well, and married so ill. I am told that, ten minutes afterwards, a gaunt, decrepit man, with red hair, and a settled scowl, slowly ascended the broad steps leading to the Hall. Leaning on the shoulder of the immaculate Suisse, he smiled serenely, and swore at every step. "By that," said Master Edkins, "I know'd as how his lardship had come at last to enjoy hisself."

Later on was the silence of the many rooms broken by the temporary sojourn of Tommy Raikes, who, like another small Tommy, "dearly loved a lord," and was as well versed as the late Mr. Hill in the talk of the town. A very small party, in a very large house, (for their only visitors were the Damers) must have been depressing; and when they left in 1845 the Hall ceased to be a dwelling-place, for another quarter of a century.

During that interval the large, lonely house was to me a casket of golden memories; or, as a pensive poem wrought in stone. Often have I wandered stealthily, almost fearing to disturb the stately silence within the two great courts; now peering through the bleared windows of the offices—scanning the tenantless stalls in the stables,



and those noble division-doors which must have been so placed when the house was altered many years ago. And then, with what interest I looked at the carved prow of the large pleasure-boat—long disused; and, in so looking, I saw in a moment the honest face of the first Marquis, and the dark ringlets of my lady's hair, as the Prince handed her to a seat, with her beautiful sisters and the Talbots: followed by Yarmouth and *his* friends Croker, Jekyll, Malden and Glengall, with a host of attendants behind. And the silvery laugh and the gentle splash of the oars came back to me from the near-hand lake, and from that Plutonian shore wrapt in eternal mist.

But especially did I love to linger within the lofty portico and trace the proud magnificence of the unrivalled entrance-hall. The slamming of a distant door thundered in the vaulted roof, making the delicate sprays of Grinling Gibbons tremble; this, and the hoarse calling of the circling rooks, were the only sounds of life and motion. Yet stay—at times there wandered over the spacious building, mocked by its feeble echo, the subdued sound of the stable clock, passed into the childish treble of old age; giving the hour lazily as if it thought: "What is the use of recording time; now that dressing and dinner and gaiety are over, and there is no mortal to heed it?"

Yet, not of the Ragley Hall merely of yesterday do I wish to speak; but of certain remarkable people and incidents connected with the older mansion, parts of which are built up in the present structure.

In the middle of the 17th century, the Conways having married into the families of Burdett and Greville, became possessed of Arrow and the adjacent manors. Edward, Earl of Conway, and Viscount Kilultagh—a man well able to breast the troublous times of the Commonwealth, chose for his wife the sister of Heneage Finch, afterwards Earl of Nottingham, and Lord Keeper under Charles II.; and with her the narrative is twined.

Lady Conway was noted for her attainments even among the learned ladies of that age. She had mastered the chief Greek and Latin authors, and had a strong leaning towards the mysticism of the early Fathers—especially that of the liberal Origen. As it often happens, with a powerful mind and strong will, the body was diminutive and the health weak; in fact, there was too much mind for the body, and in consequence the fragile form was laid aside for weeks together. Thus she sometimes lived "out of the body," by becoming habituated to certain influences which produced startling effects.

Lady Conway was no less remarkable in her associates. At a time when the Universities were troubled by the fierce contention of opposite parties; the quaint manor-house originating with John Rous de Ragueley, was the secure retreat from the turmoil of Cambridge of those brilliant light-bearers to a generation yet in darkness—Ben-

jamin Whichcote, John Smith, Ralph Cudworth and Henry More. With the affectionate Conway for a host, and his gentle wife—no mean disputant against scholarship so ripe—we may well imagine that the sun shone serenely over the dense woods of Ragley, and the sky was fair; albeit the air was charged with the sullen thunder of a nation divided against itself: and Baxter was shouting to the sleepy town at their feet, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

Very often indeed did these gifted friends take sweet counsel together in the quiet rooms overlooking the extensive park; but he who was the most frequent guest, and whose influence over the mind of the Countess was greatest, was Henry More. It is pleasant to think of him—occupying by favour the pulpit still standing in Arrow Church, and from thence showing unto the people "a more excellent way" than the stony path of a narrow theology. Perhaps he went too far in placing everything in subjection to the purely spiritual; for under such persuasive guidance, the contemplative mind of Lady Conway began to show distaste for ceremonial worship; and, much to the sorrow of Henry More, she left the Church of England, and entered the sect of the Quakers.

This was a bold step to take; far bolder than that of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, one hundred years later: but Lady Conway was the daughter of Sir Heneage Finch, and a Finch knows not fear. A few years before, and humble folk leaving the Established Church might leave some part of their ears and noses behind them. Even then, there was the loss of caste. What was that? The strong love of a husband, whose patent was the smallest part of his nobility; the ardent affection of tried friends and true, all powerful in the Monarchy of Thought—these things were treasures, the rest shadows. Yet no small stir was created in the adjoining town of Alcester when it was known that the Lady at the Hall had turned Quakeress. "What would she now do?" chimed the gossips. "Might she eat and drink? It is certain there will be no more robe-making, or garnishing of the rooms at Christmas!"

But the Countess rode into the town as usual, and afterwards, when not well, came in a coach, a new thing of its kind. There was one alteration. One or two strangers settled in the town; and shortly, a few sedate people, in a garb scarcely different from others, met once a week at Dame Pumphrey's, a goodly house near the Market Hall, still standing; when there was silence for a space. Their number slowly increased until another generation (the rein of harsh laws being loosed) ventured to build a Meeting-house, hidden from the main street; and when these homely friends left, or passed away one by one, until the very name of their noble leader was forgotten—then the Quakers' Meeting-house, scarcely more quiet than it was before, was dismantled and disused; an empty shell left by the tide of religious thought.

Meanwhile, the sensitive and receptive mind of Lady Conway was exercised by a series of extraordinary visions. *Visions* they were not to her, but as tangible and real as any other objects in the wakeful world. Surrounded as she had been at Ragley by master minds deeply imbued with spiritualism; she passed with a bound beyond the margin of surmise, into the belief that this thin partition of flesh dulls, but does not divide, sweet communion with the disembodied spirit. The belief in ghosts was common enough when witchcraft was punishable by burning, and the evil eye was still in active operation in rural districts; but the higher thought that sympathetic souls should have mystic union without union of place, or of form, threw into bold relief the dark superstition of the day.

It was the conclusion of the gentle lady that "there is neither speech nor language but their voices are heard among them." Not only the departed, but certain others dear unto her dwelling at a distance, and trembling for their inheritance in those troublous times, did the spirit of Lady Conway seem to touch as in a moment. Lying on the couch in the withdrawing-room, she murmured to her dear lord: "Prithee, hast thou not had tidings of George Rawdon this day?" To which he answered, "No, dame, he hath no behest." She continued: "Thou wilt shortly hear, for his wife is stricken with the falling sickness, and hath twice besought him to send hither without let." And on the morrow there came a letter with "Haste, post haste" outside, written by Sir George on account of his wife's sudden illness.

On another occasion, my lady mentioned that the Earl of Norwich, commander of Royalist forces, had been thrown from his horse, and she saw his leg being braced by a barber at Maidstone. "He hath asked me," she said, "for the receipt for liniment left by your aunt Elinore, and I have answered him, Yea." All this without leaving her room; and, presently, a messenger reached the house with a letter from the said Earl, describing the like accident, and praying for a particular dressing for fractures which Lady Conway had by her, and which, saith he, "I feel curiously persuaded in my own mind she hath now given to me."

These instances are recorded by Van Helmont, a man who inherited much of the shrewdness and eccentricity of his more famous father; and who lived for some years at Ragley Hall as medical attendant to the Conway family.

At that time the science of medicine was in its infancy. Even later, when Charles II. was dying, the prescription signed by fourteen doctors comprised "a volatile liquid distilled from human skulls, and the application of red-hot iron to the head." Therefore it is no disparagement to Van Helmont to observe that certain phases of the moon, and conjunction of the planets, together with the dried remnants of creeping things entered largely into his pharmacopœia. But Lady Conway chiefly regarded him, because he could well administer to the mind, and its latent development.

Van Helmont had studied much abroad, had dabbled in alchymy, and, if he did not believe in an elixir-vitæ, he held the theory that bodies of different kinds could be so tempered and attuned that one should act on the other : that, for instance, an incision having been made in the trunk of a vigorous tree, a man in fierce pain might press his throbbing face against it, and the pain would pass from him to the sensitive fibre and tendons of the tree. Perhaps this was a crude anticipation of the power of electricity. Moreover, he was one of the earliest to hold that disease is an accident of nature, to be avoided or mastered greatly by the force of the will ; and that inviting euthanasia should be the sequence of life.

Such views were not a little in accordance with the mind of Lady Conway, ever enquiring and ever perplexed by the enigma of a suffering world. But no prescription of Van Helmont could remedy the increasing ailments which at last prostrated the benevolent Countess ; and Lord Conway, much distressed, anxiously considered what other physician should be brought to Ragley. The name of one, scarcely known in England, but whose singular fame had been the subject of eager interest at Portmore, near Lisburn, Lord Conway's other beautiful seat, occurred to him. My lord wrote to his friend George Rust, afterwards Bishop of Dromore, in January, 1665, and entreated him in furtherance of his friendship to see Master Valentine Greatrake, and urge him forthwith to take ship to England, and "journey to Ragley in Warwickshire, where my lady is now grievously troubled with pains in the head."

Mr. Greatrake consented to come, forewarning the Earl that his singular success was not dependent upon his desire ; and that "there are divers hereabout whom I would wish to heal, without being able so to do."

He hastened to embark at Youghal, but the voyage proved neither safe nor speedy. For several days they were tempest-tossed in the Channel, and when off Lizard Point, being driven from their course, it was feared that the crazy old vessel would go to the bottom. Then did the Christian courage of Mr. Greatrake shine forth as St. Paul's in Adria : bidding the sailors be of good cheer in their extremity. He noticed one man—a poor Papist, "whose ignorance" he says, "I pitied ; but whose zealous trust in the protection of the Virgin and St. Nicholas, I failed not to admire ; forasmuch as when all other were clamouring for wives and parents, this sailor quietly prayed and shewed no concern."

The fame of Valentine Greatrake was spread by the crew, and after landing on the Somersetshire coast, he was soon surrounded by people anxious to witness some token of his remarkable powers.

And here it may be well to observe that Valentine Greatrake was no mere adventurer or illiterate charlatan. An Irishman of gentle birth and fair fortune, he had the higher advantage of considerable talents, developed by a liberal education. As a gentleman he would

have made his mark in society; but the mysterious gift which he possessed—a gift which has ever excited my deepest interest—caused him to be received into the highest circles; and even royalty delighted to do him honour. He was also favourably noticed by the clergy. Bishops and deans entertained him, and derived benefit from his skill. None could help liking the man; he was so humble and courteous to all, making no pretence to miracle, but rather ascribing his striking success in the art of healing to some sympathetic power (yet in the germ), of mind over matter; some supreme effort of consentient wills, which, carried to its intended length, may yet say “unto this mountain—Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it shall be done.” Thus, a deep religious feeling pervaded the outward acts of the physician. As he hurriedly passed northwards, at several places he wrought cures, some of them in a moment, and “so the wonder grew” until he arrived at Ragley Hall, on January 27th, 1665.

It was a dull day threatening snow, and a sharp north wind had fringed the river Arrow with ice; but a knot of people, chiefly tenants on the estate, lingered at the park boundary, and when Mr. Greatrake appeared with Squire Throckmorton, Van Helmont, Dr. Taylor, and my lord, these walked on either side of the horsemen. Passing the Kingslea, and skirting those noble woods described by Henry More, and where his gentle spirit loved to meditate, the party reached the Hall; then a quaint, roomy mansion of Jacobean type. It was dusk, and a ruddy light—cast from the lower windows far down the park, and kindled by logs round which had gambolled the famous white roe of Thomas Burdett—showed the warm welcome waiting within. And surely, notwithstanding the illness of the mistress of the house, they were merry, for the “King had got his own again,” and the gratitude of the nobility was great, if the definition of gratitude be the expectation of favours to come.

On the morrow, Valentine Greatrake saw Lady Conway in her chamber for a considerable time. Being assured that there was no bodily decay, he hoped to effect a cure. The sun shone. He was glad to see that; “for,” said he, “the sun, madam, is a great healer and composer.” Passing his right hand somewhat quickly down the spine, he enquired whether the patient felt a sensation as of smarting. She said, “No!” Presently he pressed one hand on the temples, and stroked the back of the head with the other: afterwards gently clasping the wrists. At first my lady experienced some relief; caused perhaps by momentary excitement and expectation, for the pains returned forcibly. Nor did Mr. Greatrake give further hope of being able to subdue them, although he laboured frequently for the space of three weeks, and his tender care increased the esteem with which the Earl and all others in the house regarded him.

The next case with which Valentine Greatrake had to deal, was alike remarkable in its origin and its cure. About one mile from

Ragley, bordering the old Roman ridgeway, were the remains of the humble priory of Cookhill; the dormitory and offices of the nuns being formed into a plain farm-house, to raise and roof which the adjoining chapel had been despoiled. Here lived a worthy couple, old John Slade and Alice his sister. Alice had long been ailing, yet no one could tell why. During the day she was cheerful; but as night came on she fell into a grievous sweat, and could scarcely contain herself for fear, and sate by the blazing hearth with her eyes fixed, starting at every sound.

For lack of rest and food she one day fell into a deep swoon; and was put to bed; whereupon, she waked and seeing that she was in her usual chamber adjoining the chapel, she struggled to escape, crying that no mortal should keep her there. Her brother, fearing that she was possessed, had her tied to the bed, and acquainted Parson More, then at Ragley, who had much repute with humble folk in allaying disorders.

Dr. More was brought by Lady Conway, and after much persuasion and shrinking, Alice Slade described to them how, on three several occasions, in that room she had seen, at the stroke of twelve, a waving figure in a black habit, with the face bound up as if for burial, and that the said figure had afterwards beckoned to her as she was binding fagots on the chapel flags; and, "mithered as I was," added Alice, "I could but follow, till she sank under the stones at the window end: and on that spot I hear her sighing and sighing every day."

Lady Conway and Dr. More soothed the sufferer; and the eager interest of the visitors in any manifestation of spiritualism, afterwards caused Henry More to examine very carefully under Alice's guidance, the place where the apparition disappeared. It was a plain slab about two feet square; and, bending with his ear to the ground, there certainly came at intervals a sound, like a sigh or a murmur. For a moment that pale, thoughtful face flushed; then it was turned to Lady Conway.

"Our senses are readily deceived," he said; "this may be but a counterfeit of nature—John Slade, bear a pickaxe this way, if ye have one."

The slab was upheaved, and proved to be the entrance to a passage or vault extending east and south. Procuring a ladder, and holding a roll of lighted flax set in oil, Henry More descended. He saw some human remains beneath the tomb of Lady Isabel de Beauchamp, and elsewhere; and, at the entrance, in a fair state of preservation, was a plain elm coffin, having burnt in the lid "Margaret Dyson, 1573, R. I. P." The mysterious noise was easily explained: for the ground was covered by several inches of water, oozing from a point near the surface: where a fragment of stone jutting out, intercepted the rill; and from this projection, the water dropping at intervals caused a gurgling, sighing sound to reverberate.

Alice Slade became easier in mind, but without manifest disease, her body grew weaker; and when Valentine Greatrake was called to



her bedside, so feeble was the action of the heart that the attendant thought she was gone. This wonderful doctor began by murmuring a few sentences in a plaintive tone, taking her left hand meanwhile.

Whereupon the sufferer opened her eyes and smiled : and after a while he repeated those strokes and passes for which he was famous. He then enquired whether she would show him the Malvern Hills ; when, to the wonderment of those present, Alice being dressed, presently walked quickly out of the house, and did as he desired. Nor was there any return of her ailments ; for Job Heritage, who was then bailiff at the home-farm, saw her as a very old woman years afterwards, and gave these particulars to Mr. Popham Seymour.

But the most startling cure was effected at Alcester. Mr. Greatrake had accompanied the invalid Countess to that town, it being the Lord's day, leaving her among the Friends, whilst he as a true Protestant attended the Parish Church. That was a long, low building dedicated to St. Nicholas, with the Chantry of St. Faith attached ; having a fine embattled tower—the only part now remaining of this once interesting pile.

Divine service over, the quality and townsfolk, having passed uncovered through the west door, Mr. Greatrake was interested in observing several aged persons wait at the gates of the chancel : whereupon the minister, peering through the trellis, demanded :—“How be ye all, good people ?” to which they answered according to their infirmity. Thereupon he opened the dole cupboard, and gave to each a certain coin. As they were leaving, Mr. Greatrake called to one of them, James Squyor, who was led by his daughter ; being drawn together by fits, and shaking withal ; and asked him “Should you like to be cured ?”

“Yes ! good master,” saith he, seeing by his dress that he was a physician, “but no 'pothecary can mend me ; for I ha' bin so this nineteen year.”

Then Mr. Greatrake bade James straighten himself, holding by the spikes round the tomb of Sir Fulke Greville : and gave him his own staff to bear at arm's length ; merely touching him gently at times. Whereupon, James Squyor, from being of dwarfish stature, and halting in his gait, did raise himself to a proper man of nearly six feet, and walked and felt as well as he did when he was a boy.

This was noted by several men of good repute ; and amongst them by the observant and ingenious physician, Henry Stubbe of Stratford-on-Avon, from whom the above account is taken.

Amongst other remarkable cases of healing were those of Widow Ledbiter and Ralph Symonds of Alcester ; Benjamin Hancocks of Bidford, Sarah Griffin of Wixford, and Ruth Quiney of Alne ; which, being well attested, were long remembered ; but it would be tedious further to detail the wonderful cures wrought by Doctor Greatrake, during a few weeks' sojourn at Ragley Hall. *How* those cures were wrought, it is difficult to imagine. Several theories were advanced ;

perhaps one of the most reasonable of them is embodied in the following extract from a letter dated February 9th, 1665, written by Lord Conway to his brother-in-law, and cited by Sir Bernard Burke :—

“DEAR BROTHER,

“ . . . Mr. Greatrak's hath been here a fortnight to-morrow, and my wife is not the better for him ; very few others have failed under his hands, of many hundred he hath touched in these parts. . . .

“ So I wonder that he had not a greater esteem in Ireland ; but after all this I am far from thinking them miracles, or that his cures are at all miraculous ; but I believe it is by a *sanative virtue* and a *natural efficiency*, which extend not to all diseases, but is much more proper and effectual to some than to others, as he also doth despatch some with a great deal of ease, and others not without a great deal of pains.”

The success of Valentine Greatrake, the Stroker, may not have appeared so impressive to that generation when we call to mind that the efficacy of the royal touch was still undoubted. A contemporary monarch, the treacherous, subtle despot Louis XIV., three days after his consecration, touched more than 2,500 persons in the great church at Rheims. His apt pupil and lieutenant, Charles II., was equally active. King William, with a sly touch of humour, gravely wished the recipient better health and more wisdom. Queen Anne, in 1712, followed suit to the tune of 200 in one day ; the baby lexicographer being of the happy number. The practice was revived in Edinburgh in 1745, and belief in it retained in the Shetland Isles so late as 1838. Shakespeare, who enshrines so many English customs, thus alludes to it in “Macbeth” :—

“ Ay, sir ; these are a crew of wretched souls  
That stay his cure ; their malady convinces  
The great assay of art ! but, at his touch,  
Such sanctity hath Heaven given in his hand,  
They presently amend.”


It is certain that the curative power possessed by Greatrake excited the deepest astonishment among the best informed and most sensible men of that day ; and, as Dr. Tulloch reminds us, these powers were the subject of formal investigation by the then recently-incorporated Royal Society ; and no such man has appeared since. Leaving Ragley by way of Evesham, he was earnestly invited by the Mayor and Corporation to Worcester ; and in their new Guild Hall, before a concourse of the citizens, he exercised his marvellous skill, to the lasting benefit of some, and to the astonishment of all. Staying at various houses of the nobility on his way, he at length reached London, was interviewed by Baillon and Douglas, and duly presented at court, near unto which he settled and practised as a physician.

A few words more about Lady Conway.

One of the most beautiful seats in Ireland, in the 17th century, belonged to her lord. It was that of Portmore, near Lisburn, and close upon the romantic borders of Lough Neagh. Here, in a spacious house designed by Inigo Jones, Lord and Lady Conway passed much of their early married life; and it was a trial to the latter when failing health prevented her from accompanying her husband thither.

Early in 1678, Lord Conway was detained in Ireland by the disturbed state of that country. He had left his dear wife apparently no worse than usual; Van Helmont was in close attendance upon her, and sent a despatch to the Earl twice a-week. On the morning of the 23rd of February she was seated at her embroidery, feeling, as she said, a strange lightness and strength, the while Mary Walsingham was reading "A Discourse on Eternitie." Lady Conway suddenly complained of cold, and, when her couch was being moved towards the hearth, her gentle spirit passed away.

So often had she swooned that the attendants believed not that she was dead. Even Van Helmont, from conclusions known only to himself, watched the body at intervals during a whole week, being doubtless deceived by a certain flexibility of the limbs and a tinge of colour on the cheeks. Deeply grieved was her husband; but urgent business detained him in Ireland, and he did not reach Ragley for some time. Therefore Van Helmont very carefully embalmed the fragile body; inserting a piece of glass in the coffin, which was kept above ground, so that when the Earl at length returned, he might look once again upon the calm face of his beloved, which turned to a likeness of her knightly father: and Collins assures us that the burial in the vault beneath the chancel at Arrow Church did not take place until the 17th of April, 1679.



## THOSE DREADFUL JAPS.

IT was a fearfully hot season, and let me tell you that heat is heat in the States. I was coming from Canada to sail the next day for home. I took the train at Niagara Falls, and had a long sixteen hours' ride before me. The nasty white dust sifted through the window-blinds and sashes; the sun glared in fiercely, spite of the shades provided by the company; the car was crowded, and every moment the atmosphere grew more and more oppressive, until breathing became absolutely painful. As things reached this crisis a brilliant thought struck me, emanating from sheer desperation. Why not get off at Albany and take the night boat down the river to New York? I should arrive in plenty of time for the sailing of the *Russia*, and escape the further misery of six hours in the train. Surely, on the beautiful Hudson, a comparatively cool breeze could be found.

We were already nearing Albany; so, hastily thrusting my scattered belongings into my portmanteau, I stood ready and waiting as the train entered the large railway depôt. Two hours later, behold me tranquil and triumphant, after a very good dinner, and with an excellent cigar, pacing the deck of the finest river steamer in the world.

It was a beautiful night, the moon at its full, the stars all out in their lesser glory. As I roamed up and down I passed the door of the ladies' saloon, and my attention was caught by a figure sitting silent and alone, in the moonbeams. When I passed again, I caught a glimpse of a bended brown head, and two ungloved hands loosely clasped together; a pretty, quiet figure, with feminine grace in its attitude. She did not look up as I stood between her and the moonlight, but moved a little impatiently as if only half conscious of the obstruction. When I came by a third time, she had vanished.

Shortly after, as I was still wandering lazily to-and-fro, I heard the sound of the piano in the saloon. For a moment I felt annoyed; the night was too perfect in itself to be marred by any of the popular war songs of the time, and what else could be expected from a performer on board a river steamer? My displeasure however soon gave way to astonishment and delight, as I listened to the strains of the "Moonlight Sonata." My love for music amounted to a mania, and when this delicious melody, rendered with all the passion of its composer's mind, floated away over the moon-washed waters, I stopped in amazement. Instinctively the thought, formed by desire, took shape within my mind: "She who thus plays must be the girl that sat half hidden in the shadows."

Throwing away what remained of my cigar, I stepped within the gilded apartment from whence the sweet sounds issued. The room was comparatively empty, for most of the passengers were on deck. As I had suspected, at the farther end, seated before the grand piano, her back towards me, I saw my Incognita. Her head was a little drooped, and the fine curves of her figure well defined against the crimson gorgeousness of walls and furniture. She was absorbed in the music. I approached quietly and stood by her side looking down upon her. Her face thus seen was very charming, softly tinted and delicately cut; a drooping mouth, half melancholy, half determined; and braids of nut-brown hair rolled high upon a shapely head.

As she finished I made some appreciative remark, to which she responded gravely, but with a certain dignified pleasantness that marked her as one used to the world.

With two true lovers of music, conversation soon springs into life; so in a few moments we were in full swing over our favourites, she arguing, differing, and illustrating with sudden touches on the keys in a manner dangerously charming, while her eyes met mine fearlessly. Handsome eyes they were, grey, with black lashes, and finely-pencilled brows.

In the midst of a lengthy argument over Chopin, in which she was displaying considerable fire and spirit, a shrill, piping voice cried out, "Mamma, Mamma," followed by a long and voluble explosion of Hindostanee, or any one of the languages of the ten lost tribes, as far as intelligibility was concerned. My companion replied in the same incomprehensible form of speech; the result being the appearance, from one of the adjacent state-rooms, of two of the most astonishing figures I had ever beheld.

They were the most ultra-ugly children imaginable, sallow-faced, with dark almond-shaped eyes whose heavy lids unclosed with difficulty, black brows and lashes, and hair growing loose upon their foreheads, brushed back and braided into long tails upon their shoulders. On one these heavy locks were ebony black, on the other of a common light brown, that added greater plainness to the yellow skin and thin, sharp features.

These two strange little folk ran towards my pretty incognita and laid hold of her with their skinny little paws, gabbling all the time in their unreasonable jargon. She answered them in soothing tones, and taking the little girl upon her lap, drew the boy to her side as she continued her consolatory remarks. Feeling decidedly an outsider in this domestic scene, I made a movement to leave them. She raised her eyes, over which a shadow had come and dimmed their charms, and said:

"You must forgive my little ones; they are Japanese and understand but a few words of English." I took this as my dismissal, and left her; but, as I looked back from the doorway, I saw her still

bending over those fearful imps, caressing their horrid little faces with her soft white hand. I resumed my promenade.

"Good Heavens," I thought. "Her little ones! She an English-woman, and they—Japanese! Then—horrible, unbearable thought!—her husband—the father of the children—what was he but a Japanese also!"

Indeed, was there not a curious blending of the two nationalities in the little faces, the brown hair of the girl, the grey eyes of the boy—like her, yet rendered unlike by the unmistakable stamp of their race! But how could such an alliance have come about? Were such things ever done? Was there no law to prevent such marriages?

An hour later, as I approached the door of the saloon, I came face to face with the mysterious subject of my thoughts. She was coming out for a breath of the evening air, she said, before consigning herself to her comfortable quarters for the night. I fancied she met my glance less calmly as she broke into a rapid flow of words, fearing perhaps I should ask some leading question.

Leaning over the railing, glancing now at the gliding water, now at my companion's face, about whose finely-cut features the moon's rays lingered tenderly, we grew more friendly. But all my efforts, put with my greatest finesse and delicacy, failed to draw from her any confidence regarding her name, her station, her past, present or future.

She was dressed in mourning I noticed, and she wore on the third finger of her left hand, a heavy gipsy ring with a single stone—a diamond of great beauty; otherwise her attire was plain in the extreme. As it grew later, she turned from gazing at the quiet river below us, and, fixing her fearless eyes on mine, held out her hand and said:

"Good-bye, and thank you for a pleasant evening."

"Good-bye!" I echoed. "But I shall see you in the morning; I have promised myself the pleasure of waiting upon you in New York. Seeing you to an hotel, or—or your home."

"You are most kind," she returned quickly; "but I am quite provided for, and I shall require no assistance." Then bowing, she withdrew, and I was left lamenting.

I did not see her again, though I lingered about the next morning, walked through the saloon many times, touched the notes of the piano invitingly. All to no purpose: she would not appear. To be sure, the elder of the Japanese horrors, the girl, came out and played upon the floor with a Japanese doll so fearfully like its owner that I fairly shuddered. Overcoming my repugnance, I approached this small specimen and asked insinuatingly for "Mamma."

The child squinted her sharp black eyes at me, and began in her high, shrill voice a voluble harangue in her native tongue, gesticulating with her elfin hands as she concluded; but, though she grinned and chattered, and winked her eyes, so like those of the doll she



held, I could make nothing of what she said. Finally, I left the brat with no more accurate knowledge of my mystery, than I possessed when I first saw her sitting amidst the moon's shadows.

My voyage home was a dull one. The ship had few on board, and among the few no sensible man to make a pleasant hand at cards, no pretty girl to keep one up in scientific flirting. Consequently my thoughts often dwelt tenderly upon *La Mystère*, as I called her in my heart, and her strange, weird, ugly children.

A season spent in London, however, threw her somewhat into the shades of memory, and when I did recall her, it was but with a momentary interest coupled with a slight feeling of disgust for the small Japs. The deeper sentiment she had excited in me I fancied dead, and though I often caught myself comparing other grey eyes with hers, I was in no way hard hit, and did not waste a thought on the possibility of our meeting again.

Life, however, is stranger than fiction; and so I found it.

I was again in the States, and again on my homeward journey; the *Russia* this time was full to overflowing, but as I had a jolly companion with me in the person of my old college chum, Arthur Harford, I felt above any chance acquaintance. We sailed late in the day, and after dinner Harford and I sat smoking, comfortably at our ease in our deck chairs. As the sun went down into the sea on one side and the moon rose from it on the other, I was reminded of that evening in the past, when, under just such a sky with just such a moon above, I had listened to Beethoven, as never before had it been my good fortune to hear him rendered.

I felt communicative, so told the story to Harford, adding as I finished:

"I would give a goodish bit to see *La Mystère* again. She was pretty and she could play—ah! how she *could* play Beethoven!"

"Bah!" said Harford, sententiously. "You have dined to your liking. You are always sentimentally inclined, Phil, after a good dinner; I have remarked it often. Go and talk to that slim girl over by the wheel-house; she may like your rhapsodies better than I do."

"You are a heathen, Arthur," I politely remarked. Nevertheless I did get up, and stole in the direction of the lone figure bending over the railing.

She was enveloped in a loose wrap of some kind, pulled well up about her throat and ears, and, as she bent upon her crossed arms, a view of her countenance was rather difficult to obtain. With invention born of necessity, I threw myself forward and tossed my lighted cigar into the gliding waves. It gleamed for an instant in the shadows of the keel ere it went out, but my object was accomplished; the sudden flash as it passed before her eyes caused her to start from her meditative posture, and throw back her head. The dark drapery dropped from about her, and, as she turned full upon me, I beheld

once more, under the moonlight, the finely-cut face and honest, earnest eyes of *La Mystère* !

A sudden thrill at my heart told me the meeting was anything but unpleasant to me. Was she equally pleased ? A slight flush spread over her brow and lost itself in the waves of her brown hair : then she held out her hand in the same old fearless manner, lifting her handsome eyes to mine.

"History and life are for ever repeating themselves," she said. "Is it not so ?"

I took her outstretched hand, I looked into her happy eyes, and in that moment fell hopelessly, helplessly, unwillingly but eternally in love with the mother of the two Japanese infants.

Of the ten days that followed I will give no minute description. Anyone will easily understand how dangerous ten days at sea passed in the presence of a pretty, fascinating, cultivated, incomprehensible woman may prove. The evenings worked the most mischief ; never were such moonlights, never such summer weather ! We three—for Arthur succumbed to the glamour—sat hour after hour in the full beauty of an almost tropical moon, while she would sing to us : for *La Mystère* possessed a voice of such power and sweetness, that even her incomparable playing faded into insignificance before it. So she would charm us both, until even prosy, steady old Arthur lost his head, and declared that, but for me, he would have placed his heart and fortune at the incognita's feet.

You will scarcely believe me, yet, during all this time, neither Harford nor I had learned if she were maid, wife or widow. There was the black dress, and the horrible little Japs, whom in my presence she had caressed and fondly addressed as her "little ones," for proofs of her widowhood ; while on the other hand, her innocent fearlessness, her absolute belief in the good of this evil world, her almost childish trust, implied a maiden's heart and nature not yet tried or moulded. Her name was Sandwell ; we always addressed her as one entitled to the prefix of *Madame*, and as she never corrected us, we had, consequently, to believe her a widow—anything less dignified was impossible.

As we neared our journey's end, I began to understand that I was deeply interested in her—so deeply and so truly, that my future seemed a wilderness of unrest without her figure in the foreground. But how present her to my stately lady mother, with all the proud blood of the *Grantlys* distilled into a double essence in her veins ? How say, "This is my chosen wife ! I know nothing about her family, or her past. I met her on a river steamer in America. She has two Japanese children—but—I love her !" A pretty statement of facts, and one synonymous with a cut-down of my present allowance, and the loss of *Thorney Grange*, in my mother's gift, in prospective.

So the days glided by ; I loved her more and more desperately, and, as I told myself, more and more hopelessly.

Once only we spoke of the future. I had made some senseless remark as to the blankness of life after our parting, and the probable do-nothing state I should sink into. She lifted her arched brows a trifle scornfully, and her lip curled a little though she did not make me any answer.

"And you," I asked, "what will you do?"

She flashed her handsome eyes upon me as she replied, "Simply my duty. You forget—I am going home to my little ones."

Oh, those horrid Japs! They had not been mentioned between us, and I had piously hoped that a merciful Providence had removed them from this sphere, and that never more should I encounter their ugly faces.

The day we landed was a forlorn ending to our summer sailing; it rained copiously; rained as it only can in Liverpool. Through some mistake there was no one to meet her, so she allowed me to take her to the train, see her comfortably placed in a first-class carriage, booked for London, and did not refuse the miscellaneous collection of literature I thrust upon her.

I was very miserable at seeing her go from me, yet I had not the courage to try and win her, Japs and all. *I* could love *her* distractedly, but not her accessories.

The guard rang the bell: I put out my hand. "Good-bye," I said, and some of the mournfulness of my heart echoed in my voice. "Good-bye, I shall not easily forget you!"

She gave me her hand, the brave eyes meeting mine unflinchingly.

"Good-bye," she returned quite calmly. "Thank you very, very much for all your kindness."

She loosed her hand from mine, the last bell rang, the train moved, she smiled, and I turned away. Looking back for a farewell glance, I saw the bright, brown head sink on her clasped hands, and I felt the grey eyes were filling fast with wilful tears. She, too, then felt this parting! It was some slight compensation for my own wretchedness, and I gloated over it as I walked towards the hotel, until the miserable idea dawned upon me, that I had let her go without obtaining any information concerning her ultimate destination. Questions innumerable had often suggested themselves during our ocean life, but a certain dignified reserve on her part completely repelled any advances on personal subjects. So to the last she had preserved her incognita.

Over our late dinner I told Arthur of our good-bye. He growled at the tears in her eyes, and added savagely:

"No sign that she cares a button for you—no doubt she was laughing at you next moment. Tears indeed—thought you couldn't see her—very pretty little trick that—Bah! I tell you it's nonsense, all women do that sort of thing—I have seen them scores of times."

After this rather depressing statement I kept my own confidence, and ere long *La Mystère* died out of our conversations, though not

out of my heart. Indeed I found my thoughts constantly roving off to those brave grey eyes, and the proud mouth, as I had last seen her look from the window of the railway-carriage. All the confusion, hurry and bustle of a gay season could not clear from my memory that one face, grown so inexpressibly dear during the summer days when we sailed together over the blue Atlantic.

I never attended a dinner, ball, or drum that the thought was not present with me, Will she be there? As the weeks flew by and I never once met her, I waxed furious at my own stupidity in letting her go, without a clue by which to discover her. Various schemes formed in my busy brain; I would insert a discreet advertisement in all the dailies; I would look up all the Sandwells, in all the different counties, make raids upon their homes and unearth in some way my beautiful, tantalising mystery; but all to no purpose. What I strove for so eagerly, Fate alone could obtain for me.

I was at the opera one night when Patti, as Margarita, was charming everyone, though to me even her delicious voice brought no solace; the entrancing music fell flat upon my ears and heart for the lack of one woman's face. Yet even as I argued with myself against this useless passion, I felt her presence near me. I raised my eyes; the occupants of one of the large boxes on the grand tier were moving about in a subdued but excited manner; I heard a low cry; and then as the group parted, my glance met the beautiful grey eyes of *La Mystère*!

At that moment the curtain went down at the end of the fourth act, and a crowd of men singing out from the stalls, prevented my reaching the box before the occupants had left it. I caught a glimpse of a white gown in one of the passages and rushed blindly after it, though it seemed that all the men I had ever known in all my life, conspired at that particular moment to keep me from flying to the assistance of my unknown. When I did reach the corridor, she was standing half supporting a lady, so beautiful and yet so ethereal looking, it seemed as if even the breath of the summer night would blow her away.

The moment *La Mystère's* eyes caught sight of me they lost their anxious look, and the little troubled frown disappeared from her brow. She put out an eager hand, from which she had withdrawn the glove, saying impetuously, as though we had parted but yesterday:

"Oh Mr. Earnsford, we are in such trouble; the carriage has not come, and see, she *must* be taken home immediately."

To offer my brougham, which was luckily in waiting, to put myself, horses, servants, everything at her little feet was the work of a moment. She accepted the first calmly enough; but just as I was depicting to myself the bliss of escorting her home, a tall, distinguished, and rather cross-looking man joined them, apparently very much heated and disgusted.

"Not a cab to be found anywhere," he said irritably, but she interrupted him.

"Never mind, George, Mr. Earnsford has offered us his brougham, so we can get Cora home comfortably without delay."

George looked at me with the air of "And who the deuce is Mr. Earnsford?" but before he could put his look into more polite words, La Mystère seized him by the arm, whispered something in his ear, and pointed to the other lady, who was growing rapidly more and more pale. George turned to me.

"You are very kind," he said, "I accept your offer without hesitation: here is my card." He held out the bit of pasteboard which I thrust into my waistcoat pocket; then, almost lifting the elder lady in his arms, he passed down to the carriage, followed by La Mystère, whose only sign of thanks was a quick look towards me from her handsome eyes, and a slight flush on her fair face. Another moment and they were gone. With a feeling of triumph I went back to my stall and listened in calm serenity to the final act of the opera.

Had I not secured the right and the means of seeing her again? The man's card was in my pocket, he was evidently some relation, and from him I could find her address, go to her and tell her—what? That I loved her, but not the little Japs; that she must love me and forget the little Japs; in fact, that with me she could not need the little Japs.

I sauntered home to my chambers, happy in the thought of what the day would bring me, put my hand in my pocket for my talisman, but—the card was gone.

I searched every available portion of my clothing, pulled my pockets inside out, but with no good result; it was not to be found. Then I sat down and sulked over it; what a fool I was not to have read the name and address before putting it away! now there was no possible chance of seeing her. In short, I was in despair until it suddenly occurred to me that at least I could ask the coachman where he landed the party. If he had not caught their name, he would remember their address.

The next morning I summoned Peters earlier than usual. Did he remember the two ladies and the gentleman he took from the opera last evening? Oh yes, he remembered perfectly. Where did he put them down? Could he tell me that? Undoubtedly: the gentleman had given him half-a-sovereign: of course he remembered. It was No. — Eaton Square.

Peters retired, and I, once more triumphant, prepared my mind for the happiness in store for me. My inclinations advised me to seek the lady of my heart immediately, but my obstinacy, though I dubbed it propriety, urged me to wait until the approved hour for visits; over a cup of tea one grows so much more intimate and confidential.

At a little after four I strolled into Eaton Square, and rang the

bell of No. —. The door flew open. "Not at home," said the irreproachable butler.

"I called to enquire —" I began, when he resumed in a most respectful tone, "Was I Mr. Earnsford?" "Yes." "Then my lady had left directions that should Mr. Earnsford call, he was to be told they had all gone to the country, that my lady was better, and very much obliged for Mr. Earnsford's kindness."

"To what part of the country?" I asked, insinuatingly.

"To her ladyship's father's," replied the man-servant, implying by his manner, Of course you know where that is, or, if you do not, you know nothing, and are not worthy of enlightenment. As I stood hesitating what more to say, a door at the end of the hall was pushed back and, within the room thus revealed, I beheld the elder of the two Japs—the girl with the wild yellow hair and black eyes. She caught my unwilling gaze, and pointing her finger at me, commenced jabbering something in her mother tongue. I lingered no longer; another instant the door closed, and I stood outside the wide portico, in silent rage.

So near and yet so far!

A week went by. At the end of that time, I found one Saturday morning, with my other correspondence, a letter to this effect:

"St. Mary Cray, Kent, June, 186—.

"MY DEAR SIR,—The ladies of my family have reported to me your kindness and politeness to them the other night at the opera. Their hurried manner of leaving town prevented their thanking you in person when you called. Will you do me the honour to pass a few days at my house in this old-fashioned village? It will give me great pleasure to receive you, and to show my appreciation of the kind services you rendered one of my daughters some months ago, to which you have now added another to the list. I enclose the trains; pray take which best suits you,—Yours sincerely,

"HENRY KENDALL."

Needless to say, I accepted the invitation by return of post. Two days later, the four o'clock express saw me speeding on my way, this time with every assurance of meeting *La Mystère* face to face, and learning at last somewhat of her history, past and present, and maybe form for both of us some possible future.

At St. Mary Cray I alighted. A groom came forward: a moment more and we were bowling along over a fine country road, past the old grey church with its graveyard, nestled in the very heart of the poorer cottages; past the rapid river Cray, dear to followers of old Izaak, and down the pretty winding road towards a large group of trees at the extreme end of this quaint Kentish village. A drive of less than half an hour brought us to the lodge gates, then a moment more, and the Priory stood before us; a dear old-fashioned latticed-windowed house, with an overhanging roof, and triple chimneys of



the Tudor period. The door stood open; it always was open, that door, testifying mutely to the hospitality of all who dwelt within.

A fine, handsome old man came out to meet me, with snow-white hair crisp and youthful standing about his head.

"So," he cried in a ringing voice. "This is Mr. Earnsford! We have you at last, and are delighted to see you, sir." Then turning to someone within, he called: "Here Weasel, tell Cora and Dorothy, Mr. Earnsford has come."

Some things come to one by instinct: I knew that "Weasel" could be no other than one of the small Japs, and my instinct proved correct. Presently there appeared the delicate, fragile-looking lady I assisted at the opera, and at her side the Japanese boy, his sallow complexion, black hair and eyes, looking more dismal than ever beside her flower-like fairness.

"This is my daughter, Lady Dinsmore," said Mr. Kendall; "and this—is my grandson."

I thought the old man's happy face clouded somewhat as he acknowledged the last relationship; and I experienced a horrible sensation of the inevitable creep over me, as I found, here at the threshold of her own home, evidence of Dorothy's being the mother of these children. *La Mystère* must of necessity be Dorothy, for had I not heard them all address Lady Dinsmore as Cora, and then too, had she not just the face for a Dorothy, not beautiful, but bright, and fair, and proud?

The day waned and no Dorothy appeared: it was not until dinner time that I saw her. She came into the drawing-room last of all, wearing some kind of thin black gown that showed her white arms and neck, with a bunch of roses at her waistband. Mr. Kendall simply said,

"You and Dorothy are old companions; no need to introduce you. What makes you so late, Dolly?"

"Angel would not go to sleep," she answered in a low voice. "I had to sing to her until she did."

The same look of annoyance passed over his face that I had noticed when he spoke of Weasel. He said a little sharply:

"You take too much care of those children, Dorothy. Leave them more to the nurses."

"I cannot, papa. You know I promised *him*."

"Well, well, never mind my dear; we won't discuss it. Mr. Earnsford, will you give your arm to Lady Dinsmore—Dolly, you come with me. Sorry George wasn't able to come down to-night, but an M.P.'s always busy now-a-days."

A most agreeable dinner followed, and one I should have better enjoyed had I not been haunted by the all-pervading presence of the two absent Japs, and by the half sad expression upon Dorothy's face, that had settled there after her mention of *him*. Could it be possible that this sweet Englishwoman regretted her Japanese husband!

Only one circumstance gave me hope, her name : Sandwell had a truly English ring, and could not be orientalised. Shortly, however, that faint consolation was destroyed by my servant, who, a worse gossip than any *femme-de-chambre*, poured out to me the facts that she had taken the name of Sandwell from an old aunt whose property she had inherited, the name being part of the legacy. "They do say, sir," continued Jackson, "as her own name was a monstrous queer-sounding one. She's always called Mistress Dorothy through the house, and has only been home a short time—only since my lady's marriage; and when she did come, she brought them fearful blacks with her. It's shocking to hear them a-calling her Mamma, and it don't seem natural as they should be hers."

Alas ! my fears and surmises were rapidly becoming certainties. I felt that, ere long, I must look the matter squarely in the face, and make up my mind that in loving Dorothy I must love the Japs as well. In choosing her for my wife, I must accept her past, and her little ones with it.

A week, two weeks, were gone, and still I lingered at the Priory. My passion for Dorothy had become the prominent part of my being. Day by day, hour by hour, it became more obvious to me that I should part from her either as her future husband, or a badly-wounded, unsuccessful suitor. Yet, during these two weeks, not one word had ever come to my ears regarding her past life. She was still young—too young for her to have been anything more than a slip of a girl when the heavy cares of life apparently became hers. She spoke seldom of herself, never of her life in the States. Yet she was open-hearted as the day, and talked well and earnestly on all subjects; was most affectionate to Mr. Kendall, and devoted to the little ones. The latter, by a lucky accident, were confined to the nurseries with some childish ailment. She was never addressed save as Mistress Dorothy, or Dolly; I adopted, naturally, the former; there was a fitness in it that pleased me: was she not my mistress, and I her humblest servitor?

Well, to cut it short, we were walking home one evening from a lawn party—tennis had not come into fashion in those days—given at one of the neighbouring houses; Lady Dinsmore, her husband, Mr. Kendall in front, Dolly and I loitering behind them. It was a lovely moonlight night; the little river rippled like a silver thread at our feet; the trees cast deep shadows before us; the air was sweet with a thousand flowers. The influence of the night was not to be resisted. Another moment and—she knew it all. Knew how I loved her, how I had fought off that love, and how it would not be conquered, but grew stronger and stronger until it held me captive, and made me sue for her love in self-defence.

No Lovelace could have pleaded more warmly, and no Clarissa listened more coyly. The beautiful colour stole over her face, her

slender hands held each other in sweet confusion, and the proud, handsome eyes were lowered beneath the ardour of mine.

At last she spoke.

"The children!"

"Ah, Dolly, Dolly!" I answered; "do you suppose I would separate them from you? I must love them, for your sweet sake. I confess," I added, impatiently, "I would rather they were not yours, and not Japanese. Of course I have no doubt your husband was no end of a good fellow, but that's neither here nor there; they *are* yours, and that's enough. I love you, I want you; and naturally must take the children with you. I am not such a savage as to ask a mother to part from her little ones!"

"Husband!—father!—me!—my own children!" faltered Dorothy, her grey eyes full of indignant surprise; then on a sudden breaking into a ringing peal of laughter. "Oh, my poor, misguided, credulous Philip! And did you think me the mother of Angel and Weasel? *I* married! *my* husband a Japanese! Oh, forgive me, but it is too delicious!"

Dolly, however, was merciful. She saw my confusion, and choking back her merriment as best she could—though it would crop forth every moment in little spasmodic bursts—she took my arm, and related the following incidents.

"Mr. Kendall is my stepfather. My mother, an English lady, was the widow of a Spanish Don, who, being on the unfortunate side of politics, at his death left my mother very poor, and with two little babies. My twin-brother, Guy, was always a wild, harum-scarum boy, and, as he grew older, never could agree with either my mother or her husband, though a kinder father could not be. Guy ran away at the age of sixteen. We heard nothing of him for four years. Then, two years ago, a letter reached us from the clergyman of a Japanese settlement in the Far West of the United States, saying Guy was very ill. His wife, a Japanese lady of royal birth, had died, leaving two little ones to his care. The clergyman stated that he had performed the marriage ceremony between them, she having previously become a Christian, and added, if we wished to see Guy alive we must lose no time.

"Of course, there was no end of a scene, and my poor mother, long a sufferer of heart trouble, died in consequence of the shock. Mr. Kendall was thus rendered totally unfit for travelling, even if my step-sister's health would have permitted his leaving her. I persuaded him to allow me to go to America—I was used to going about, and did not fear the journey. I reached San Francisco in time to see my poor brother before he died, and to promise him, as a last request, to take care of his little ones and be a mother to them. I was bringing them home when I first met you, and our second meeting came about by my being obliged, some months later, to go back to the States and take possession of their property as their guardian, my brother having left them with a handsome fortune."

"But why not have taken a maid with you?" I interrupted. "Why travel so far alone?"

"Because," returned Dorothy, "I have learned that maids, since I was the age of twelve, especially where a sea-voyage is concerned, are far more trouble than anything else. They are simply encumbrances. No. I had no fears at going alone. I am used to it. I went each season to my great-aunt Sandwell in France, and, as we travelled considerably, I soon learned to manage for the entire party. When my aunt died, she left me her property with her name, and this ring"—holding up her pretty hand, where blazed the diamond in its gipsy setting that Arthur and I had speculated over—"because," she said, 'I was the only one of the family that would put up with her vagaries.' At Mr. Kendall's request, I added to my name the prefix due only to a married woman, as a safeguard in my travels, though the soubriquet of 'Mistress Dorothy' was given me long ago, after the famous Dorothy Fox of Chatsworth Hall."

She paused, then added a little breathlessly, but with a dignified movement of her proud head :

"I have never been married. I am simple Dorothy del Balbo."

"Oh, Dorothy!" I cried in an agony of shame—"Will you, can you forgive my stupid mistake? I was a fool, a blind, idiotic fool! But do forgive me, my darling! Show your Christianity by heaping coals of fire upon my unworthy head—say Yes to my pleading!"

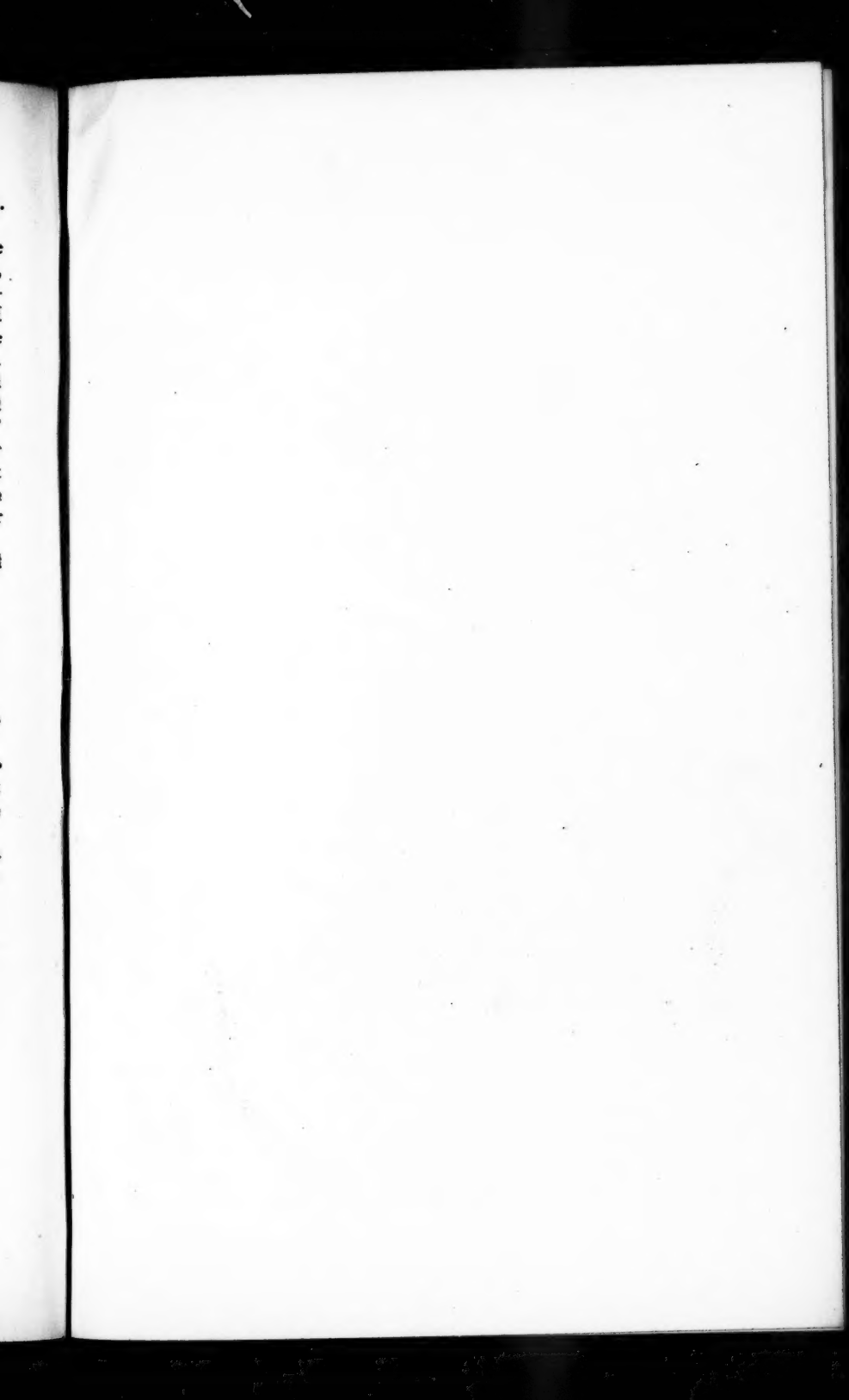
"If you wish it," she replied tenderly, and lifted her proud eyes to mine, proud no longer, but full of truest love.

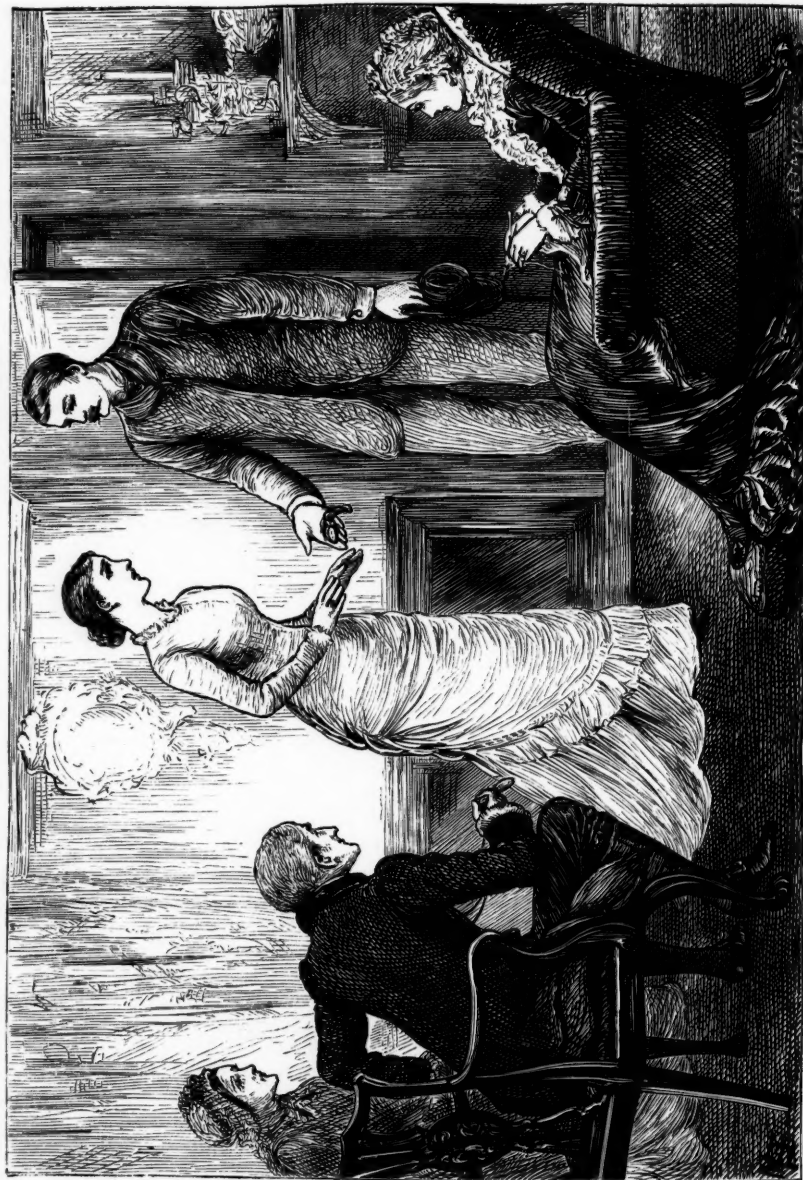
And there, in the shelter of the woods, only the bright moon to look down upon us, I took her in my arms and sealed the contract that made me then, and has made me ever since, the happiest man in the world.

And the little Japs, you ask? Guy, more familiarly known as Weasel, is a fine young fellow now at Cambridge, and carrying all before him. And Alice? Look at that tall, slight girl now entering the room, in white fleecy drapery that clings closely about a finely-moulded figure; masses of golden hair twine about her shapely head; black, pencilled brows and deep almond-shaped eyes complete the beautiful apparition. To-morrow is her wedding-day, and, looking at her as she stands there, you hardly wonder that she is making one of the best matches in Kent.

A. DE G. STEVENS.







M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

THE MYSTERY CLEARED.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.